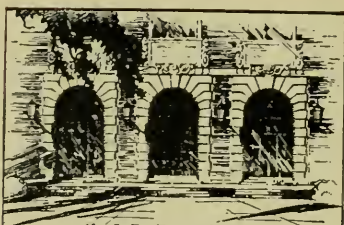


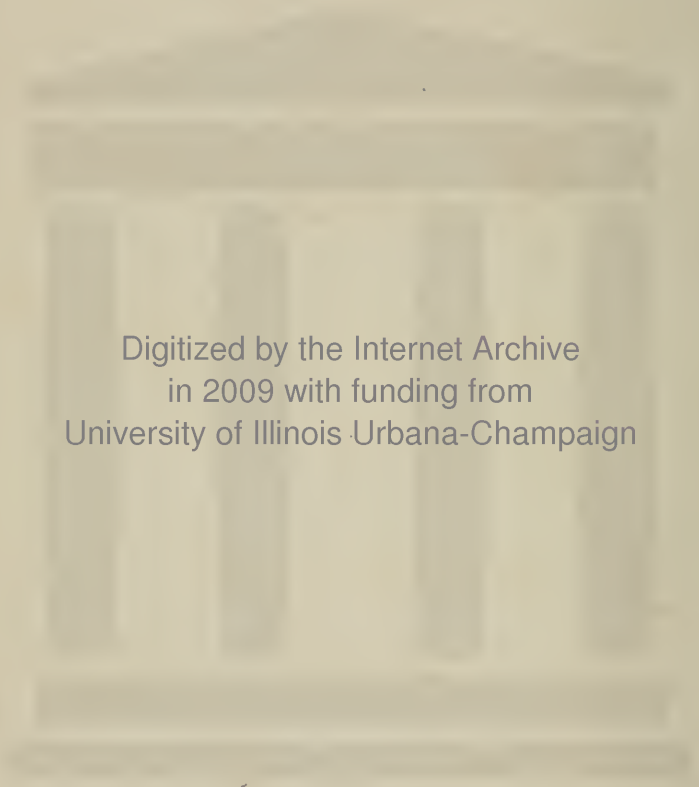
823
M815ab
v.2





LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
M815ab
v. 2



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2009 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

ABEL ALLNUTT.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“HAJJI BABA,” “ZOHRAB THE HOSTAGE,”
“AYESHA,” &c.

And if I have done well as is fitting the story, it is that which I
desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain
unto.

APOCRYPHA.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1837.

29. 11. 23. 11. 11. 11.

11. 11. 11. 11. 11. 11.

11. 11. 11. 11. 11. 11.

11. 11. 11. 11. 11. 11.

11. 11. 11. 11. 11. 11.

11. 11. 11. 11. 11. 11.

11. 11. 11. 11. 11. 11.

11. 11. 11. 11. 11. 11.

11. 11. 11. 11. 11. 11.

11. 11. 11. 11. 11. 11.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENTLEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

025
m815ab

v. 2

ABEL ALLNUTT.

CHAPTER I.

*The Allnutts catch a glimpse of the ruin which awaits them.
The simple-minded are helpless before the worldly-wise.*

ABEL passed a sleepless night; his mind was filled with apprehension for the future, and owing to his inexperience of the world and his ignorance of what is called business, he was uncertain what might be the extent of the misfortune so inopportunately announced to him. The length of time which had elapsed since he had received tidings of his brother added much to his present affliction; for to his advice he would naturally have had recourse. Trying in vain to seek some relief to his anxiety by sleep, almost ere the day had

dawned he arose, dressed himself, and leaving his bed-room, with noiseless steps descended into the rooms below ; and there the traces of the late scene of gaiety and feasting were spread far and wide as if to upbraid him for having sanctioned so much folly, waste, and extravagance. He wandered over the deserted, dusty, and gaudy rooms, and glided by the disordered tables spread over with the remnants of the supper, like the Genius of Desolation hovering over departed grandeur. "What will become of us all !" he would frequently exclaim in mental agony ; and then recovering himself, would again with folded hands reverently exclaim, "God's will be done !" He apprehended evils greater in magnitude than perhaps they really were, and looked upon immediate starvation as a matter of course after the immediate loss of revenue. In his own mind, so far as regarded himself, he determined to gain his bread without shrinking from the humiliation ; but when he reflected upon the situation of his sisters and niece, he

wrung his hands in despair—for what could they do?

Mary was the first to make her appearance ; but as she came bounding down the staircase into the parlour, her steps were suddenly arrested by observing the wan and woe-stricken looks of her uncle. She paused, and approaching him with caution, took his hand, and inquiring after his health, looked into his face with a beseeching look. Abel was not prepared to answer her questions, but inquired whether her aunts were likely soon to appear. Mary immediately ran up to hasten their steps, saying, “ that she was afraid her uncle was not well, and that he required their immediate attendance.” Barbara very soon appeared, followed by Fanny ; the one bent upon exerting her best medical skill, and the other fearful lest so doleful a result should be a bar to future gaiety : but they no sooner began to ascertain the nature of his disorder, than he stopped all further proceedings by taking the fatal letter from his pocket and desiring Barbara to read it.

“What can this mean?” said she, catching the apprehension expressed in Abel’s face: “what has happened? Is John dead?”

“Read,” said Abel; “you will soon see.”

Barbara read aloud: “Sir,—We have the honour to inform you for your government—”

“*For your government!*” exclaimed Bab; “that can’t be for you. You may be certain that here is some mistake.”

“Read on,” said Abel.

Barbara read to the end of the letter, and then pondering for some time, she said: “You may be certain that you are under a mistake. You are told here that the information given is ‘*for your government.*’—Does it not stand to reason, that if it is for the Government, it is not for you?”

“What have I to do with Government?” said Abel despondingly.

“Who knows?” said Bab; “you may have a great deal to do,—you may be somebody without your knowing it. Why should these men tell you that they write for your

Government ? — they must have some meaning in what they say.”

“ It may be a banker’s phrase,” said Abel, “ the meaning of which you know nothing about. But the long and short of it is, that the payment of our dividends is stopped, and that we have at present no means of paying for our daily bread : we are paupers.”

“ Paupers !” exclaimed Fanny in utter dismay.

“ Paupers !” echoed Bab ; and then pausing awhile, she continued, saying : “ But this can never be ! Abel, you must be out of your senses ! Consider a little. This letter does not come from John. When we hear him tell us that we are paupers, then I will believe it, but not till then : he surely never would have planned our ruin, and therefore why should we believe what the foolish bankers write ? Believe me, you must be a Government man without your knowing it.”

“ What have the bankers to do with John ?” retorted Abel ; “ their business is with us and our money. If they do not choose to make

us any more payments, which they here say they will not, then we starve: nothing can be clearer."

"But this can never be!" again exclaimed Barbara, apparently struck by a bright thought: "if somebody is not to be paid, it is Mr. Woodby: he it was who managed the business for us, and he ought to suffer, — it stands to reason that he ought."

"My dear Barbara," said Abel with the deepest tone of resignation, "if it be God's will that we meet with misfortunes, do not let us repine, or lay blame where none exists; but rather let us receive the blow with fortitude. As for Mr. Woodby's share in the transaction, he advised us for the best; we sought him, he did not seek us: and as I dare say he will advise us for the best again, being conversant in money transactions, it is my opinion that we immediately lay our case before him and be guided in our conduct by what he may advise."

"Let us go instantly," said Barbara, highly excited by apprehension of the impending ruin, but still secretly cherishing a convic-

tion that her first impression upon reading the bankers' letter was the true one. "I am sure there is something more in those words about the Government, Abel," she added, "than you are aware of. I should not be surprised if John had made you a man of consequence without your knowing it. Who knows! you may be treasurer, or overseer, or some such thing to Mexico; and the bankers may be privy to it although you are not. But let us go to Mr. Woodby: I dare say he will know all about it, and tell us how we may take the law of the Mexican Government; for it stands to reason that something must be done."

During this conversation Aunt Fanny's face had gradually been lengthening its features, until, scarcely able to control her feelings at this sudden prospect of ruin, she exclaimed, "Barbara, you wouldn't surely tell Mr. Woodby? Why, Mrs. Woodby, and Lady Thomson, and all the parish will know it before the day is over. What will they say? and just after the ball, too!"

“Fanny,” said Abel, “be not a child! the first step towards the diminution of misfortune is to know how to bear it. Of what use are all the lessons of submission and resignation which our parents taught us from our infancy if they are not to be put into practice? Let the world do and say what it pleases—let our care be to do what is right.”

Fanny sat down, looking around her upon the relics of yesterday's gaiety, the picture of despair. Mary crept to her uncle's side, and with tears shining in her expressive eyes, although a melancholy smile was on her face, she seemed to say—for she was silent—“Depend upon me for my endeavours to do credit to your instructions!” Her mind involuntarily glanced at the thought of possessing in Edward Manby a friend who would never desert them in their need, and a bright gleam of consolation darted across her mind as she made an inward appeal for protection to the Author of her being.

As soon as the necessary preparation for their excursion to Belvedere Hall could be

made, Barbara and Abel took their departure, much to the astonishment of old Betty and the servants, who already began to suspect that something of importance had occurred.

They arrived at the house when the family were at breakfast, and were straightway ushered into the breakfast room, much to the astonishment of every one present excepting Mr. Woodby, who no sooner perceived them and caught a glimpse of their solemn features than he immediately guessed the nature of their errand. Mrs. Woodby and Lady Thomson exchanged glances of astonishment, and then began a course of inquiry which extremely puzzled Aunt Bab in framing such answers as might at once save her veracity and preserve her secret. She entrenched herself in general assertions, saying that something had occurred which had made them seek Mr. Woodby's advice upon a point of business; that the South Americans had behaved in such a shameful manner to them, that they ought to be sued in the court of chancery without loss of time.

Mr. Woodby, having had time to reflect upon the part it was expedient to take, and having finished his last cup of tea, invited them to follow him into his closet; where having duly pressed them to be seated, he inquired of Abel in what manner he might serve him.

Abel immediately unfolded the bankers' letter, and placed it in Mr. Woodby's hands: but before he could even adjust his spectacles or throw himself into a proper attitude for giving advice, Aunt Barbara exclaimed, "Now this letter can't be for Abel, Mr. Woodby; it is '*for his government.*' He is either a Government man, or it is nonsense: now is it not so?"

"Let Mr. Woodby read," said Abel calmly.

Woodby read the letter through, and then looking alarmingly grave, shook his head and said, "This is an awkward business."

"But what is the meaning of the words '*for your government?*'" said Barbara with the greatest eagerness of look and voice.

"That is a mere commercial phrase," said Woodby, "one that is now almost gone by in

good writing, and has nothing to do with the main business."

Barbara's face fell into a look of hopeless dejection ; for greatly as she had been excited by hope, so much the more did she now sink into despair.

"What is to be done?" said Abel.

Woodby, making one of those faces which so often indicate a ponderous oration, and pulling off his spectacles at the same time, said, "Why, you see, these new States have as yet but little idea of the sacred nature of loans, or public credit, which is the same thing ; and therefore if they can't pay their dividends, why they won't. A rich country like England, where the consols yield but little for one's money, and where there is a great accumulation of capital, or indeed cash, jumps at a new country that wants what she has got, and lends with her eyes blindfolded, as one may say ; although Mexico in truth is good security, because she has mines, or gold and silver in the raw state, and will, I make no doubt, pay all in good time, although at present she may be

a little hard up or so. Therefore, you see, you may feel safe about your money ultimately, although you will get none just now."

"But it is just now that we happen to want it," said Abel; "for the whole of our fortune is involved in the Mexican funds, as you well know."

"Yes," said Barbara, who began to rouse from her state of dejection,—“Yes, you must well know it, for you recommended us to place it there, and you insisted upon yielding to us your shares.”

"Yes, madam," said Woodby with great self-complacency, "I did so; and happy I was to be able to serve a friend, particularly after the recommendation of your own brother: but everybody is aware that foreign stocks are not like our own: they yield more, 'tis true; but then they are ticklish—one can't lay one's head upon them and go to sleep."

"But you told Abel, Mr. Woodby," said the pertinacious Barbara, "that putting one's money in the Mexican funds was like eating one's cake and keeping it too. Now, I am afraid that we shall never see it again."

“As for that, ma’am,” said Woodby, looking a shade less composed, “it is true that I thought well of Mexico, and do so still, for the country is as full of gold and silver as an egg is of meat; but I trusted in their good faith as a nation or government, and if they don’t know what public credit means, am I to blame?—if they won’t pay, I can’t make them. We should call it being bankrupt, whatever they may do.”

“We are quite aware,” said Abel in a tone of great conciliation, “that you did for the best, and advised us for the best; and as we are quite sure that you will do so again, we are come to seek your advice and to request you to tell us what we ought to do. We are ignorant of the nature of money transactions, and we request you to instruct us in the fittest course to pursue.”

We do not wish our readers to conclude that there was anything in Mr. Woodby’s conduct in the money transaction in question which might have been objected to on the Stock Exchange, or which would not have been fully

acquitted before any commercial tribunal ; but when he came to consider that it might be canvassed to his disadvantage in the country, and a wrong light thrown upon it, we must be permitted to assert that the advice which he now gave was very much biassed by selfish considerations.

“ Why,” said he, again making up a face, “ this is an awkward business, there is no doubt of that—misfortunes at a distance always look greater than they really are. Here are you at Ivycote, and your bankers, and your money, and all your means of living, are in London, some hundred and eighty miles off; and you will be fretting and fussing yourselves, daily anxious for news, and daily being disappointed. Now, my advice is this: go straight to London—make the bankers your object—watch events—wait there till things take a turn. In my various transactions in the City, I have always remarked, that if things go wrong at one time they are sure to come right at another, and particularly in stocks: like buckets in a well, if the Bulls were at the top at one season, the Bears

were sure to be looking out of the bucket in the next. So is your business: you may be depressed now, but all will come right in time. Go to London without loss of time—look after your own concerns; and although I shall be distressed to lose you as a neighbour, yet still it is better to know you are happy at a distance than miserable next door.

When this speech was over, Abel and Barbara looked at each other with mute significance, so total, so new, and so unexpected was the change which such a proceeding would produce in their whole being. They sat dumb for some time, until at length Barbara exclaimed, “Go to London! Why, how shall we ever get to London?—and when we are there, how are we ever to find our way to the place where our Mexican stock is?—we know no one there. Besides, how can we ever leave Ivycote? have we not lived here almost all our lives? Every tie we have in the world is here—we know no one except those who live here and hereabouts. It will break our hearts to leave our dear home—and at my age how am I to acquire new

habits? Must we positively leave it?" she said with tears in her eyes and with a face that would have melted a heart of stone.

"We must go, I see that," said Abel after a long and affecting pause: "there is no help for it."

"Indeed," said Woodby, "there is nothing in London that a child might not do. Why, you will like it when you have been there a day or two; and a change of scene will do you all good for a little while, when let us hope that you will come back again to Ivycote better than ever."

"Fanny will like it for one, I see that," said Bab more composed.

Upon this, the brother and sister took their leave, with their hearts and minds full almost to bursting of conflicting emotions, but with their determination made up upon the necessity of leaving their long-cherished home. Woodby saw them depart with no little satisfaction, for in his speculating mind he could foresee in their absence many circumstances which would turn to his own advantage.

CHAPTER II.

The first introduction of the simple and unpractised to the ways of the town.

WHEN Barbara and Abel returned to the cottage, they found Fanny and Mary, with old Betty and honest Brown, waiting for them with outstretched necks and faces anxious to learn the result of their visit.

“We must go to London this minute,” said Bab : “there is nothing else left for it !”

The extraordinary sensation which this announcement made upon those who heard it may be more easily imagined than described, when it is recollected that scarcely one of them had ever stirred beyond the immediate neighbourhood of their village. “Go to London !” was echoed and re-echoed by every

mouth, whilst each person was impressed by a different sensation in saying it.

Fanny cried and laughed by turns with nervous excitement and bewildering thought; Mary looked at her uncle and aunts to catch their feelings, and to adapt herself in ready obedience to their wishes; old Betty thought the end of the world was about to take place; and honest Brown stood stiff, with his hands down his sides, like one impaled.

Before the day was over—ay, before an hour had elapsed, the news had spread all over the village, that the South Americans had used Miss Barbara so ill, that she and Mr. Abel were going to London immediately to have them up before the Chancellor. This having taken place precisely the day after the ball, naturally made every one suppose that this untoward event had occurred during the entertainment; and to those who were unpractised in geography, it appeared that these unmannerly savages had actually been insolent to the lady in her own house.

The character of Abel by this event seemed

all at once developed into manliness and activity, and he became an instance of the useful influence which responsibility exercises upon the mind. Impressed with a sense of the duties that had devolved upon him as the protector of his sisters, he at once shook off those habits of seclusion which he had so much cherished, and bestirred himself the first and foremost to meet with firmness the ruin that now stared them in the face. He directed everything, provided for every contingency, and showed himself as full of sagacity as he was, alas ! of inexperience in the ways of the world. It was concerted between them that he and Barbara should first proceed to London in order to ascertain the position of their affairs, and that then they would decide whether to return to Ivycote, or, sending for Fanny and Mary, to quit that place entirely and establish themselves in London until they could reinstate themselves with comfort and respectability. They thought it right to take old Cruikshank, the village attorney, into their councils ; who, when he heard of their position, immediately

recalled to mind his own prophetic exclamation upon inspecting the preparations for the ball; and, attached as he was to them by long acquaintance, he determined to do his best to serve them. He was installed as their agent in case of need; and as he knew that Abel had no acquaintance in London who could help him upon a first arrival, he gave him a letter to a nephew of his, one Mark Woodcock, a youth established as clerk to an eminent solicitor in Lincoln's-inn.

The short time which elapsed between their determination to depart and the moment of getting into the coach that was to convey Abel and his sister to London was passed in an unceasing expression of hopes and fears, of anticipations of pleasure, of apprehensions of danger, such as may be supposed to come from innocent minds ignorant of the modes and practices of life in a capital city, and in making preparations for a journey which in imagination appeared as full of difficulty as an expedition of discovery into the interior of Africa. Fanny conceiving that the town men whom

Barbara was about to encounter were like so many famished monsters lying in wait for her, never ceased urging the necessity of taking every precaution against their wiles. Old Betty only thought of highwaymen and footpads, and conceived it impossible that her mistress could ever get safe to her journey's end without being robbed of her trunk, and of everything it contained. Abel himself did not exactly know what was likely to happen to them on the road, and was fully determined to keep his own council upon the business which was taking him to London, lest, should he divulge it, the nature of his distress might have some effect upon the price of stocks. Aunt Bab's volubility had almost forsaken her, owing to the many cares which revolved in her mind, in this great undertaking which she was about to achieve.

At length the morning arrived when they were to leave their long-cherished home. The coach which was to take them up passed by early in the morning on the high-road that skirted the village, and thither the whole family went in order to witness the phenomenon of

Aunt Bab getting into a stage-coach. Little was said—their hearts were too full to speak ; they walked on almost mechanically, each wrapped up in melancholy thoughts. Barbara alone seemed full of immediate care, for having abandoned the responsibilities of office as house-keeper ; she was still so full of her old avocation, that she did not cease giving directions of what was to be done during her absence. When at length she and Abel, with their trunks and bundles, were deposited in the teeming vehicle, she would have paused on the very step with more last words touching a pair of woollen stockings for an old woman, had not the impatient coachman urged her in ; and before she could finish her speech, she was snatched from before the uplifted faces of Fanny, Mary, old Betty and honest Brown, with the swiftness of the wind—her last words dying in the air as she rolled away.

Being duly seated, they found only one other passenger in the inside. He was a sort of person new in his appearance to the eyes of both our travellers—a commercial coxcomb, aspiring

to look like a groom and to speak like a pick-pocket, overgrown with hair, wearing a coat dotted over with pocket-flaps, and squaring his elbows whilst he turned in his feet. He was very forward withal; and no sooner had he made a survey of the persons of his fellow-travellers, than he addressed them in a familiar, off-hand manner. The road led in sight of Belvedere Hall; and with scarcely a single preliminary observation, he at once commenced his observations on all that came before him.

“ Oh, that ’s Belvedere Hall, I believe they call it,” said he, addressing himself to Abel; “ it belongs to a sharpish old chap, one Goold Woodby, who has coined more gold by his wits than ever the slaves in Mexico have done by hard labour.”

“ He has the reputation of being a rich man,” said Abel.

“ Did the gentleman say anything about Mexico ?” said Aunt Bab.

“ Yes, ma’am, I did,” said the stranger; “ and I say, too, that old Woodby there, in that house we have just passed, has jockeyed

more people in those outlandish funds than can be counted, and has in consequence been promoted from the Stock Exchange to this flash house."

"But the Mexican funds have always been thought very secure?" said Bab, notwithstanding the jog which she received on her knee from Abel.

"None but a *spoon* would ever think so," said the stranger.

Bab's curiosity once excited, she could not stop. "And pray, sir, how can a spoon think! I never heard of such things before."

"Oh, ma'am," said the other, "if you don't know what a spoon means, why then take a *flat*."

"And pray, sir, what may a flat be?—I am afraid I am ignorant."

"Why, ma'am, whatever you like: a *gawk*, a *num*, a *minny*—any one of these names will do as well."

Bab looked at Abel for an explanation, and still appeared confused; when the stranger, making a vulgar contortion of his mouth at her

ignorance, at length exclaimed, “ Why, a fool, ma’am : you ’ll understand that maybe ? ”

“ Indeed ! ” said Bab, making a significant exclamation, which she would have followed up by more observations had she not been stopped by Abel’s admonitory knee. The stranger having fallen upon a subject with the nature of which he was fully conversant, (for he was a professional traveller for a commercial house,) was happy to be listened to as he became communicative. He described the nature of the foreign loans then so much the rage throughout the country, the juggles to which they gave rise, the rapid fortunes made by the wary and the ruin entailed upon the ignorant ; he exposed in vulgar, though significant forms of speech, the tricks, the lies, the impositions which were practised by the designing upon the weak, and so proved the truth of the saying, that ‘ a fool and his money are soon parted,’ that poor Abel and his unhappy sister positively cowered under the conviction of their folly. They sat silent, deeply ruminating upon their situation ; and so absorbed

were they in their own thoughts, that they scarcely heeded the stranger, who never ceased exhibiting his knowledge of the road and of the country as they were rapidly whirled along.

On any other occasion, had Abel and Barbara been free from care, and their minds open to observe all that was passing around them, their reflections would have been worth narrating, for there is nothing more amusing than to learn the effect of first impressions upon new minds ; but theirs, upon reaching London, remained almost the same blank sheet of paper to which they might be compared upon their departure from Ivycote. Having passed the night in the coach, they felt very much jaded as they approached the term of their journey, and began to long for the moment of their release. The stranger left them at the very beginning of that interminable labyrinth of streets through which a traveller winds at whatever avenue he may enter the great metropolis ; and upon his exit, when the coachman asked Abel where they would please to alight, Barbara would have said, "At the

bankers' in Lombard-street," so anxious was she to attain the object of her journey, had not her brother checked her by saying they would go wherever the coach stopped, as all inns for the present were alike to them.

Thus they drove on through one never-ending thoroughfare into another, until they thought that fate had settled them for ever in a stage-coach. In vain they extended their necks through either window seeking their long-expected resting-place—nothing like it was seen: crowds for ever succeeded crowds—shops for ever succeeded shops—houses for ever succeeded houses—the further they advanced, the deeper they seemed to dive into the chaos, until, having passed a bridge such as their imagination could never conceive to exist, and seen more masts of ships than could be counted, they at length drew up at an obscure inn, ominous in name, and mean in appearance, called the Fleece, in the Borough. They entered through a narrow gateway inscribed all over like a geographical register, and found themselves in a dark, dismal court-

yard, without perceiving a single object within to cheer or enliven them. The heavy atmosphere was rendered doubly gloomy by rain, and everything wore a prison-like appearance. Abel and his sister, jaded, depressed in spirits, bewildered by noise and novelty, at length slowly descended from their confinement. They were handed out by a waiter, who received his orders from the mistress of the inn, a species of Patagonian Medusa—with this difference, that instead of snakes writhing about her head, there protruded a variety of stiffened ribands, which darted from her coarse and flushed face like rank weeds springing from a foul soil, and she for the present became the dispenser of the destinies of our travellers. She first inspected them from head to foot, cast her eye over the quantity of luggage by which they were accompanied, and having given a contemptuous glance at the texture of Aunt Bab's gown and the fashion of her bonnet, she allowed them to take possession of a small front parlour looking into the noisy, disquiet street. Here they inspected everything with

a sort of dogged curiosity, first the miserable prints, then the inscriptions on the panels and looking-glass, then the obsolete furniture, until, like mice in a trap, they began to peep from behind the green perpendicular blinds, and observe what was doing without. Their attention was soon diverted by perceiving the lively drama of Punch being performed in a little perambulating theatre directly before their window, which, by dint of blows inflicted, and exclamations of passion, and the gravity of an accompanying cat, managed to extract the first smile that had broken over the features of the unhappy pair since they had left their home. From this they were drawn away by the appearance of breakfast, a meal which they much required to recruit their exhausted spirits ; and this having been duly demolished, Abel insisted upon his sister going to her bed-room and taking a few hours' sleep before they sallied forth to seek the abode of the bankers, the one object of their thoughts and wishes.

Barbara struggled hard to persuade Abel to do the same ; but he was so alive to the ne-

cessity of acquiring some information concerning the relative position of places, in order that he might not be entirely lost in the excursions they were about to make, that he refused her entreaties, although in matters of health he was usually tractable to her wishes.

He then rang the bell for the waiter, a stolid-looking youth, with hair growing almost out of his eyes ; and with a tone of business-like inquiry (for he did not wish to be taken for a bumpkin) he said, " Pray, can you tell me whether Longhead the banker lives near here ?"

" Longhead ?" said the waiter, with his hand to his hair. " No, sir, I can't say I do ; but there 's Mr. Broadhead lives over the way, if he will do for you."

Abel did not quite make out whether the youth intended to make game of him or not ; but, nothing abashed, he continued, saying, " No, it 's Mr. Longhead of Lombard-street, that I want."

" Ah, this is Broadhead of the Borough ; so he won't do."

“But there is such a street as Lombard-street,” said Abel as if he would himself be giving information. “You know that, don’t you?”

“I believe there is too,” said the waiter; “and I wish I had the picking of it.”

At length Abel was fairly obliged to ask his way to Lombard-street; which obliged him to make the discovery that he was one totally new to London, and thus at once opened the eyes of the waiter as to the sort of personage he had to deal with.

“Maybe you are a stranger here,” said the waiter. “If so, I say mind your eye, for London is but a queer place for the like of you. If you be going to Lombard-street, let me recommend you to take care of your pockets when you are coming out of it.”

Abel took the hint, and passed his time until his sister should be ready in ruminating over his views. He was ever slow to think evil; yet still the conversation which he had held with the stranger in the coach concerning Woodby had produced an impres-

sion which taught him how necessary prudence was in trusting even one's best friend in pecuniary matters. The caution given to him by the waiter also checked those feelings of universal philanthropy which he had ever cherished, and he began to suspect that the love of one's neighbour, particularly in a capital, was a duty which required restriction. He was confirmed in this as he took his first walk along the street in order to try how he could pick his way, upon hearing some one behind him exclaim, "Sir, you'll lose your handkerchief!"

Abel immediately felt in his pocket for that commodity ; but not finding it there, exclaimed, "But it's gone!"

The only consolation he received was the sound of a hoot and a laugh from some one who had rapidly disappeared round a sharp corner.

CHAPTER III.

*An insight into one of those City commodities called
'a bubble.'*

BARBARA, refreshed by sleep, sallied out at about two o'clock with Abel from the Fleece Inn, to seek out Messrs. Longhead the bankers in Lombard-street. They took the proper direction ; but on passing London Bridge, their eyes became so fascinated and their attention so riveted by the new and various objects which presented themselves, that they had almost forgotten the object of their search. After having attracted much attention from the passers-by owing to their primitive appearance, and after much inquiry, they at length succeeded in reaching a dark, unwashed, begrimed-looking mansion in Lombard-street, into which

they entered through a greasy door and found themselves in front of a battalion of busy men, not one of whom took the least heed of them, but who continued counting out and paying money, writing and making calculations, as if they were not present. Abel stepped up to one whose face wore a civil expression, and having inquired for Mr. Longhead, he was desired to proceed into an inner and still darker room, where several men were seen also busy in the various labours of the pen. As soon as our travellers appeared, a well-bred gentleman, the acting partner, stepped forward, and having offered them seats, seemed by his inquisitive look to inquire the object of their visit. Barbara felt relief by this act of civility, and Abel seemed to revive from the weight of care which oppressed him. They squared themselves in their respective chairs as if announcing their intention of setting in for a long consultation, although the gentleman by certain indications of impatience and hasty mode of speech wished to indicate how valuable time was to him.

“ Our name is Allnutt,” said Abel and Barbara both in the same breath.

“ Very happy to see you, Mr. Arnold,” said the banker.

“ I beg your pardon,” said Abel with great modesty ; “ my name is Allnutt.”

“ The Allnutts of Ivycote,” added Aunt Bab.

“ Extremely happy to see you,” said the banker, casting his eye towards a book in which he had been writing. “ Can I be of any service to you ?”

“ We come,” said Abel, “ in consequence of a letter I received ;” at the same time drawing from his pocket the well-known document, and handing it to the banker, he added, “ We wish to be informed what is to be done.”

“ Oh !” said the banker, opening and glancing on the letter ; “ I see. Yes,—just so : there has been a great fall in Mexican securities,—the panic still continues, and I do not believe that you would get anybody even to look at your stock although you might be willing to give it away for nothing.”

“ Give it away for nothing !” exclaimed Bab *sotto voce*.

“ This is truly unfortunate,” said Abel, looking very serious, “ for it involves our whole fortune. Pray, sir, how has this come to pass ?”

“ You must be quite aware, sir,” said the banker, “ from your knowledge of the world, and of the English world in particular, that any novelty accompanied by hope of profit, encouraged and abetted by the Government of the country as this has been, is sure to turn the whole community, otherwise sober, into a nation of madmen. What is good in the abstract, becomes vicious in the hands of rogues and adventurers. So great was the illusion, that whilst the madness was raging, had a project of a loan to any place known or unknown in the world—even to the planet Mercury, been set on foot, I make no doubt that it would have been taken up and filled. With a country holding out the specious advantages which New Spain did, there was not a moment’s hesitation ; people were only angry that she did

not require a larger loan—all they wanted was to lend. Those who proposed the loan to the Mexican Republic seemed, however, to have had sufficient foresight as to what might be its fate, and secured the exact payment of two years' interest : those two years have now expired, and the dividends are no longer paid."

" But Mr. Woodby did not tell you that," exclaimed Barbara to Abel,—“ did he ?”

“ No,” said Abel, “ he did not.”

“ Mr. Woodby has been a successful speculator,” said the banker with marked emphasis in his manner.

“ Then what is likely to happen ?” said Abel in a desponding tone. “ Are these funds never to pay their dividends again ?”

“ I do not say that,” said the other ; “ but at present I should positively assert that there is no chance of it. I will leave you to judge for yourself from the last accounts received from that country.” Then addressing himself to one of the clerks in the office, he said, “ Mr. Shovel, what is the latest news from Mexico ? it was, I think, in this morning's paper.”

Mr. Shovel brought in a paper, and said,
“ Here it is.”

“ Pray read,” said the chief to his clerk, and turning himself towards his desk, continued the occupation from which he had been drawn; whilst Mr. Shovel read as follows, Abel and Barbara meanwhile lending their whole attention to his words:—

“ “By the accounts received by the Fox packet just arrived from Vera Cruz, it appears that the whole Mexican Republic from one end to the other is one scene of anarchy and civil war.——” ”

“ Ah !” exclaimed Barbara with dismay ;
“ where can John be ?”

Nobody heeding her question, Mr. Shovel read on. “ “ Its ill-organised government seems to be on the brink of dissolution ; for Don Guzman de Sombrero Blanco is marching from Vera Cruz towards Jalapa to meet General Vincenze Puercogrueso, who is marching from Puente del Rey, and a skirmish has already taken place, in which one brave patriot has been sacrificed.——” ”

“Where was John?” exclaimed Barbara again.

—“ ‘ In the north, El Carnicero had taken possession of Durango ; whilst Zacatecas was in full rebellion, headed by the Cura Rufiano. The whole country were of one mind in hunting down Gachupinos, and they were flying for safety to the coast.’ ”——

“ I wonder where could John be ? ” said Bab, with the expression of her face increasing into agony.

—“ ‘ In short, the whole of New Spain was about to be torn by civil war,—the roads were overrun by banditti,—the mines were deserted ; there was no man to whom the public could look up, and property was not more safe than among a horde of savages.——’ ”

“ What could have become of John ? ” said Barbara, still with increased interest.

“ Ah ! ” said Mr. Shovel, addressing his chief, “ here is the very decree of the Congress of Mexico relative to the stopping payment of the dividends.”

“Read it,” said his chief, looking up from his book.

“This is the secretary of state who writes.—
‘The supreme executive power has ordered me to proclaim as follows:—The supreme executive power, nominated by the sovereign congress general chosen by the United Mexican States, to all those who shall see and hear the present, be it known that the same sovereign congress orders what follows to be decreed:—

“ ‘The sovereign congress general chosen by the United States of Mexico, ordains that the Mexican nation, so famed for its generosity, for the loyalty of its people, and for fidelity to its engagements, having taken it into consideration that the weakness of a state is misery to its inhabitants, and that to attempt to do that which is impossible is only to cast contempt instead of inducing respect, and in order to show its high sense of national strength when opposed to foreign demands, has decreed that the wants of the nation are paramount to all considerations; and thus as-

serting in the face of the whole world its high devotion to national good and to the public prosperity, decrees, and doth hereby decree, that the payments of dividends on all foreign loans are suspended until further notice. Given in our National Palace in Mexico, and signed,' ” said Mr. Shovel, “ ‘by twenty signatures of persons to us unknown.’ ”

Abel, overwhelmed by the rhapsody of high-sounding words which had struck his ears, kept his seat, entirely overwhelmed by the hopeless aspect of his affairs; but Barbara, whose brain had gradually been thickened in its perceptions since the beginning of the news read by Mr. Shovel, had at length become so totally bewildered by the unintelligible bombast of the last part, that, yielding to her fears that no one could exist in such a scene of confusion, she again exclaimed, “ But where was John ? ”

The well-bred banker being at length struck by this often-repeated question, turned to the imploring Bab, saying, “ I beg your pardon, but pray who is John ? ”

“Dear me!” said Barbara, “don’t you know who John is?—Major John Allnutt, our brother, who went out to take possession of the mines, and to civilise and introduce steam and all that into Mexico—he is John. How is it possible that all this should take place and he be there?”

“I now recollect,” said the banker; “he went out director of the Anglo-United-Coffer and Jalap Company;—Major John Allnutt—I recollect very well,—a major of engineers—a very ingenious, scientific, enterprising officer.” Barbara and Abel both cheered up at hearing these words. “He went out with excellent prospects,—a large capital subscribed—shares at a premium—great quantities of steam-engines and Cornish miners also were sent out; but something, I think, happened to that company—what was it?—I recollect something about it.” Then addressing himself with an exertion of voice to Mr. Shovel, who sat at a distance, he said, “Mr. Shovel, what happened to the Anglo-United-Coffer and Jalap Mining Company?—I think so they called it.”

Mr. Shovel, just raising his head a little from his desk, said, "There were no such mines to be found, and therefore the company was dissolved;" and then went on again with his occupation.

"The company was dissolved," said the banker, "and therefore, I suppose, you will soon see your brother back in England."

This circumstance still more involved Abel and Barbara in perplexity, keeping up their spirits, on the one hand, in the hope of seeing their brother, but, on the other, destroying all the brilliant expectations they had formed of his prosperity and increasing wealth. At length Abel, totally unable to decide for himself what he ought to do, and seeing in the gentleman before him one who showed every inclination to be kind and considerate, in that exuberance of confidence which the wretched are so apt to bestow upon those who they think can protect them; said, "Sir, I beg your pardon for venturing to speak so boldly to you; but might I venture to ask what you would do if you were circumstanced as I am?"

The banker, who really was a kind-hearted man, answered after some hesitation, "In truth it is always difficult to give advice in individual cases; but so far as the Mexican question concerns the shareholders, I would say that they ought to remain on the spot to second and assist by their endeavours the furthering such petitions as they might present to parliament to induce the king's government to interfere with the Mexicans in order to procure redress. Things may change; but experience tells us when the credit of a country has once been shaken, as in this instance, it takes long to restore confidence. Therefore, I would not have you be too sanguine in the hope of being speedily reinstated in your funds; but I would remain on the spot, and any assistance which we can afford you, I am sure we shall be very happy to put forward." Upon which making an impatient turn in his chair towards his desk, and Abel thereby taking the hint to depart, the parties separated with mutual expressions of civility and compliment.

The brother and sister upon leaving the banking-house walked on in silence for some time, both absorbed in thought at all they had heard, until Abel stopped short, and taking his sister's hand, said, "Barbara, we must send for Fanny and Mary immediately: we must stay here."

"Does that stand to reason, Abel?" said Aunt Bab.

"I am afraid it is the only thing we can do, circumstanced as we are," said he, whilst he endeavoured to suppress a deep sigh that rose from his breast.

Barbara in her secret mind partook of his feelings; but whether from the kind and civil manner with which they had been treated by the banker, or whether from the prospect of soon seeing John, it is true that at that moment she did not view the state of their affairs with the same desponding eye that Abel did. She hoped by her brother John's presence that things would all come right—for she argued, as he knew so much more of worldly matters than they did, so he would soon find some

means of restoring their fortunes, and therefore she was infinitely more elated than Abel. She freely communicated her hopes to him—dwelt most emphatically upon the offers of assistance made by the banker, expressed great confidence in the never-failing resources of John's genius, and with all the self-complacency of ignorance acting upon a sanguine temperament, had imagined her road to wealth and distinctions before they had paced half their steps back to their inn.

Abel, however, would not permit his sister to live in such a state of illusion; he solemnly warned her that she must prepare her mind to meet with all the privations and misery that flow from poverty, and to face not only with boldness, but with meek resignation, the trials which it was evident were preparing for them: his mind, habitually imbued with the most serious and religious thoughts, seemed to expand into a wider field of gratitude towards the goodness of Providence for deeming him an object sufficiently worthy of notice that he should be thus tried in his principles, and he

endeavoured to instil the same feelings in the mind of his sister, who, although an innocent-minded, well-disposed creature in the abstract, was apt to be carried away by the family failing—a too sanguine hope of enjoying by quick transitions the sweets of worldly prosperity.

Upon reaching their resting-place, Abel determined upon sending a note together with old Cruikshank's letter to Mark Woodcock, requesting him to call at the Fleece Inn, for he found that without his assistance it would be difficult to secure proper lodgings; and whilst he was so doing, Aunt Bab passed her time in writing a letter to her sister Fanny. The reader may perhaps like to see this production: it ran as follows:—

“ MY DEAR FANNY,

“ As soon as you receive this letter, you must begin to prepare to leave Ivycote. We have met a most civil, charming, amiable man in Mr. Longhead the banker of Lombard-street, who knew John, and called him an ingenious officer, and everything that is nice;

but he said that he was coming home immediately, because he could not find the mines that he was sent about. This appears strange ; but this excellent banker told us, that for the present our stock is not worth even giving away—there has been such a fall in Mexican securities, as he called them—and recommends us to fix in London in order to send petitions to the Houses of Parliament that they should attack the South Americans for us. Therefore, as we cannot do this at Ivycote, we must all be here ; so begin to prepare : get the plate, linen, and clothes together—the groceries too—but never mind the cheeses and the bacon, as they must be sold with the furniture. Abel will write to Cruikshank about selling our things, with the pony, the pigs, and the cow ; and then we will settle the day when you must set off, for we have not got our lodging yet in this immense city, which is something more wonderful than I ever thought of, or you either. We have got into the Fleece Inn, in the Borough, and have written to Cruikshank's nephew to come to help

us taking a lodging. Do not think of setting off till you hear from us again. You cannot think how well Abel is!—he sends you both a thousand loves. I am ever

“Your affectionate sister,

“BARBARA ALLNUTT.”

CHAPTER IV.

A cockney described. The advantages of a friend in need.

THE next morning found Abel and Barbara struggling with a London fog,—a phenomenon it may well be called to those who see it for the first time. They groped their way from their bed-rooms to the parlour, where they sat scarcely able to distinguish each other, enveloped in the dense vapour like persons passing through the purifying smoke of a lazaretto. Oppressed as they were by this darkness over the visible world, as well as by the sense of their own miseries, they were not a little relieved as the fog cleared away to observe their old friend Punch again performing his antics before their window: it seemed as if he had

divined their misfortunes and was endeavouring to relieve them. They were lending all their attention to the humour of his jokes when Mr. Mark Woodcock was announced, and in walked the nephew of old Cruikshank the village attorney. We must present him as a rare specimen of the true cockney, in mind as well as in person and manners; being endowed with every prejudice to the most frantic degree in favour of his own country, and feeling and expressing a corresponding contempt for all things that related to others. He held it almost as part of his religion, that one Englishman could beat three Frenchmen 'any day of the week,' as he would say; that roast beef and plum-pudding, as representatives of English fare, were dishes which put to the blush the genius of French cookery; that all other nations were pigs compared to the cleanliness of the English; that we rode better and sang better, and had better fruit and better vegetables;—in short, that we were in every respect more civilised than other people, and that London was the

largest and the finest capital in the universe. He spoke a language replete with expletives, and so intermixed with words and idioms to be found in no dictionary, that in order to understand him it was necessary to be educated in the same school. He had a sharp snipe-like face, hair growing straight down his head—a freckled, fair complexion—light blue eyes, and possessed a cross-made person, which he attempted to adorn by the dress of fashion, but which he in fact succeeded to turn into a most exquisite piece of caricature. His uncle had educated him for the profession he had adopted, with the exception of superadding the knowledge of the French language,—a precaution, as he said with prophetic foresight, which would prepare him for whatever might turn up, and which, by the bye, persons in the middling ranks of life are apt to look upon as an introduction to gentility.

Mark, although vulgar in the extreme, who, if he were tried at the standard of refinement, would be called in round terms a black-guard, was nevertheless a good-hearted, well-

disposed, and serviceable youth. On the occasion now before us, he did not hesitate for a moment in obeying his uncle's request to make himself as useful as possible to the persons recommended to his care. He hastened with great zeal from his lodging, near Lincoln's-inn, to the Fleece in the Borough; and when he got there, feelings of indignation rose in his breast when he perceived the obscure place in which his friends had settled themselves,—for in the City, as elsewhere, there are various degrees of comparison touching the gentility of situation. He had no sooner made himself known, than he insisted upon Abel and Barbara accompanying him immediately in search of lodgings. Then making several curious interjectional exclamations, he said, addressing himself to Bab, “But it's a burning shame that they have shoved you into this dog-hole!—why, it's just fit to keep cat's-meat in, and that's all!” He then asked them where they would like to live. Finsbury-square he recommended as the *flash* place in the City, and Tower-hill he thought handsome; Broad-street was good,

but he deprecated Cateaton and Threadneedle-streets, or Mincing and Philpot lanes; but asserted that there were neat things to be had in the City-road and about Peerless-pool.

Abel and Barbara, who knew as little of one place as they did of another, said they did not much care where they lived, provided they could occasionally see their bankers, and be ready to catch John whenever he appeared; and they were soon ready to accompany their guide. Barbara, however, having expressed an opinion, that since they were likely to be some time in London, they ought to live in a place where their friends might come to see them, Mark, all at once striking his head as if a bright thought had enlightened him, announced that he had a friend who lived in Silver-street, Golden-square, in the West end, which was the genteelest place of all; and he was certain that by applying to him he would get them lodgings in his neighbourhood, or perhaps in his very house.

Barbara was pleased with the sound of these names: to live near a Silver-street and in a

Golden-square appeared to her a circumstance so ominous of good, that she almost jumped at the idea, and she urged Mark to conduct them thither as soon as possible. They fought their way through the crowded streets, stopping open-mouthed to look at the shops, then turning back to expostulate for being rudely pushed about, until they reached the corner of St. Paul's Churchyard, when Barbara, arresting Abel's progress, came to a stand and pulled him on one side to keep him from the press, which was more than usually overpowering.

"What are we standing here for?" said Mark, turning back to seek his companions.

"We'll only wait a bit," said Barbara, "till the people have come out of that large church."

Mark was amazingly tickled by this piece of information; but, instead of breaking out into a horse-laugh, he contented himself, out of regard to good manners, merely to exclaim between his teeth—"The old girl is a rum one, however!" and invited them to follow him without more delay.

At length they reached the house of Mark's

friend, who took them at once to a house in Golden-square, a respectable-looking tenement, with three windows in front and a brass-knocker on the door, and here they hired a suite of apartments as their future home.

Whoever has seen the approaches to Silver-street — dismal from the surrounding objects, unclean from a neighbourhood of miserable dwellings, and abounding in bad scents—and brings to his imagination the fresh, cleanly, fragrant, and cheerful Ivycote, will perhaps have some notion of the virtue and self-denial exercised by Abel and Barbara in relinquishing the latter for the former abode. But Abel had fully made up his mind to put up with every privation and to relinquish all comforts until he could retrieve their fortune; and, moreover, in his own person to do his utmost to gain a livelihood for himself, his sisters, and niece. Barbara, taking Mark's word that Golden-square was the head-quarters of gentility, easily acquiesced in the eligibility of her lodgings; and having made their arrangements for taking immediate possession, they retraced

their steps whence they came, in order to return accompanied by their goods and chattels.

Having reached the Fleece, they ordered a hackney-coach, and then called for their bill. The waiter brought in that inevitable document with a self-sufficient smirk, and delivered it with a flourish into Abel's hand. The sum total amounted to a great deal more than he had expected. Casting his eye over the items, he discovered, the first day, "To Punch, 1s." and the second the same charge. "Barbara," said he to his sister, "did you take punch? I am sure I did not!"

"Punch!" exclaimed Bab; "what punch?—I have drunk nothing but water since I have been here!"

"They have charged punch twice!" said Abel, "here must be some mistake." Upon which he rang the bell for the waiter.—"We have had no punch!" said Abel in a mild tone of voice; "why is it charged?"

"I believe you have, sir," said the waiter; "but I'll inquire." He went out and returned an instant after and said, "Yes, sir, you've had

Punch twice,—once yesterday morning, and once this.”

“This can never be!” said Abel. “Pray tell me, where had we it?”

“Why, you had it at the window there,” said the waiter. “I saw you.”

“At the window!” exclaimed Bab and Abel both at the same time. “This is a gross imposition—we cannot allow this!—how can you prove it?” said Abel.

“The man outside saw you, as well as me,” said the waiter. “Why, you wouldn’t enjoy Punch without paying for it, would you?”

“What do you mean by punch?—you surely don’t mean the puppet-show in the street?” said Abel.

“Yes, sir, that’s the Punch I mean,” said the waiter with the greatest effrontery.

“Blow me!” exclaimed Mark, “if I ever heard the like of this!—this is doing business with a vengeance! She is a good one at a pun, however—I will say that for her!”

“Call in your mistress,” said Abel to the waiter; “we must settle the matter with her.”

She soon appeared, and flung into the room with such an air of defiance, and with so red a face, that it was evident she was armed at all points for war. She stood with one hand on the door, and with the other on her hip, and begged to know if anything was wrong. Abel soon told his griefs in mild expostulation; asserted that what was done for the amusement of all in the street could not be brought as a specific charge to him in the house, and finished by announcing his determination not to pay such a bill. This declaration was answered by a burst of invective and abuse, expressed in language so totally new to the ears of Abel and Barbara, that they shrank from her presence like pigeons before the hawk. She had recourse to the same line of argument which low people invariably adopt—that is, in the first place, of giving a definition of the word ‘gentleman,’ and then starting from that point to give large and varied views upon things in general.

“You call yourself a gentleman, I dare say now,” said she to Abel, her face and action be-

speaking anger and brandy — “there’s that” (snapping her fingers at the same time) “for such gentlemen!—A pretty gentleman indeed, as won’t pay for what he’s had! You’ve had Punch, and therefore you must pay for Punch—that’s flat. I should like to see you—ay, and a great deal better than the like of you, try to leave my house without paying that bill—ay, and every doit of it too!—you’d find that we are not such nincompoops as you take us for! And I, a lone widow too, to be insulted by such as you!”

She would have said much more, had not she been stopped by Mark, who, like one hearing a tune which is familiar to him, immediately falls to singing it himself, was so roused by the sounds of a language which formed part of his vocabulary, that at length, unable to contain himself, he poured forth all the energies of his eloquence in such a manner that it startled the landlady, and tended in a great measure to check her violence.

He soon gave her to understand that he was a lawyer; a circumstance which blanched her

cheek, but fired her eye—for the effect which such a person produces upon one of the lower class is very much the same as spitting upon hot iron, causing it to hiss and to cool at one and the same time. She continued her violence, but it was violence on the defensive, until at length fairly beaten by the sounds of certain talismanic words which lawyers are apt to pronounce, she retreated under a volley of the most intense abuse. The charges of the bill were properly abated ; and Abel and Barbara, conducted by their successful champion, having mounted the hackney-coach, left the Fleece Inn under the full conviction that that emblem had been adopted by some conscientious scoundrel of an innkeeper, who had determined to tell no lie, not even by sign.

It need not be suggested that the landlady, having concluded from Abel and Barbara's rustic appearance, and being confirmed in her judgment by what she heard from the waiter, that they were totally new to London and ignorant of its ways, had ingeniously contrived the trick of Punch to increase her charges. Let it

be said that this circumstance served as a warning to the new-comers to be on their guard in all matters portentous of a bill ; and as they took possession of their new lodgings, they took care to be duly informed upon every point which involved to them so weighty a consideration. Mark was of the greatest use in making their arrangements for housekeeping : he went and came, fetched and carried, with the most zealous attention ; nor did he quit them until he had seen them fairly installed and surrounded by the various necessities of life. He then left them after receiving a pressing invitation to return the next day ; whilst they lost no time in writing letters to Ivycote, to give the last instructions to Fanny and Mary for the pursuit of their journey, accompanied by the address of their present abode.

Abel wrote to Cruikshank, giving him instructions to proceed immediately with the sale of the furniture, provisions, live and dead stock, at Ivycote, and to dispose of the lease of the house upon the best terms, reserving only such things as his sisters might want. He

calculated that with the money so produced he would be in possession of a sufficient sum to enable them to live on in London until some turn should take place in their affairs ; whilst at the same time he determined to discover and to pursue the best mode of increasing their means either by the ingenuity of their brains, or the industry of their hands. He was deeply affected as he wrote this letter ; for, during its composition, he could not omit revolving in his mind the possibility of their being reduced to the greatest straits. Unknown in a large capital, and ignorant of its ways, usages, and resources, he felt how great were the chances of their being thrown into the lowest abyss of poverty, and becoming beggars and wanderers in the streets. At the same time, hope would spring up and dart a ray of consolation athwart the dark fears of his breast ; for he would cling to the certainty of being encompassed in his path by the power of a protecting Providence, and would ever and anon call up those words, the constant refuge of the wretched, in which the holy poet asserts that from

youth to old age ‘ he had never seen the righteous man forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.’ He attempted all in his power to conceal his feelings from his sister, who, excited as she had been by novelty, and by the many cares incidental to their new situation, had almost forgotten their miseries in their hurry ; but when she came to a recollection of their true state, and when, pen in hand, she was about putting the finishing stroke to their former happiness by writing to her sister and niece to abandon all and join them, she became quite overwhelmed by her grief, and ere she had written five lines, she burst out into a violent paroxysm of tears. The brother and sister had sat in silence each over their letter ; but when this burst of woe came to Abel’s ears, so corresponding to his own, he could contain himself no longer, and he also wept aloud.

CHAPTER V.

Simplicity and silliness combined are the best ingredients for making a fool.

WHO that has ever lived in the small community of a country village and its neighbourhood, but must feel how great a sensation would be produced by such an incident as the breaking up of an establishment like the one at Ivycote, and the dispersion of its inhabitants. Ever since the memorable day of the abrupt departure of Aunt Bab and Uncle Abel, the subject matter of gossip and conversation among the high and low, rich and poor, was their motive for such a hasty step. The most simple occurrence in a city is a subject of marvel to a man in the woods; a dozen respectable people may be ruined in one street without its being known in the next: whereas, if an old

woman loses her hereditary pair of bellows in the village, it raises a hue and cry all over the hundred. The plain fact of Mexico having refused to pay her dividends, when transported into the country, was distorted into every absurdity or exaggeration which ignorance could devise.

As soon as Fanny had received her sister's letter, she found herself supplied with so excellent a pretext for leaving their old abode, and the breaking up of their household, that she did not fail to make use of it to whoever chose to hear her. Wherever she went, her first words were, "I am going to London in a few days to petition parliament;" and thus along the road, at the alehouse-door—at the chandler's shop—at the blacksmith's anvil, and at the plough-tail, nothing was spoken, of but that Miss Fanny was going to London to petition parliament. The object of the petition seemed to be entirely absorbed in the high-sounding fact. Every one had heard of the losses sustained by the family; but as no one could make out the complicated reasons

involving the history of foreign loans, dividends, and national securities, no one ventured to explain them ; therefore they remained satisfied with the solitary explanation above mentioned.

The only approach to the truth was made by Betsy Cruikshank, who, having heard her father the attorney discourse upon the subject, thought that she might speak her mind, and therefore the next time she saw her opposite neighbour Mrs. Humphries the schoolmistress, she was heard to say across the road, " Have you heard the news ? Miss Fanny is going to London to petition parliament."

" What for ?" said Mrs. Humphries.

" Because they say the Mexicans have seized all Mr. Abel's stock."

" What stock ?" said Mrs. Humphries.

This question puzzled Betsy, who, pausing a moment, said " His live stock, to be sure."

" Oh !" said Mrs. Humphries, apparently quite satisfied, and then very soon after left the care of her school to spread about the report ; and thus Betsy's news, by the end of the day, having run through as many variations as

a simple tune does in modern composition, at length stopped at this fact—that the village stocks had been run away with, and that Miss Fanny was going to London to petition parliament for a new set.

Ever since the absence of Abel and Barbara, Edward Manby had not failed to call constantly at Ivycote. He came and went daily, more and more enamoured with the charms and virtues of Mary; but Fanny always cherished a secret something that those old long-acknowledged beauties of hers would work their way into men's hearts in spite of every obstacle, and that Edward was gradually becoming their victim. He was, it is true, very attentive to her; but whilst his tongue in accents kind and gentle addressed the aunt, his eyes and heart were all with the niece. Mary, however much she might be charmed with Edward, and however much she might be pleased with his conversation, still, in the present circumstances of her family, she felt how imperative it was to check those feelings which, if indulged, might still add to their miseries; and

she determined to watch the emotions of her heart with the most scrupulous care, lest in giving way to her partiality she might hold out false encouragement to the object of it. She was, moreover, oppressed with anxiety concerning her father, from whom it was long since she had received any intelligence.

Edward was seated in the parlour with Aunt Fanny and Mary when Barbara's second letter arrived. As soon as Fanny had read it, and fully understood the pressing nature of its contents, although well prepared by the first letter, she was seized with one of those hydra-headed fits of fussiness which are so apt to disorder a weak mind, and in this instance so weak that it had not capacity to take in more than one thing at a time. London, a stage-coach, her trunk, petition to parliament, her bandbox, a handsome banker, Golden-square, her brother John, groceries and packing—all these things in rapid confusion arose in her mind, and produced such a bewilderment of ideas, that although she sat fixed in her chair, yet she seemed pulled about in

fifty different ways at once. She willingly would have got up and done all that was necessary at one and the same time; but, after a long struggle, she was so fairly overcome by the nervous excitement which this call for immediate action produced, that all she could do was to burst into tears, and for a time she freely gave way to violent weeping.

Mary, too, was distressed: she would fain have given consolation to her aunt, but it was out of her power to help her, so agitated was she by the thousand cares which had all at once burst upon her mind. Edward, perceiving that women in so forlorn a situation require the prop of man's assistance to carry them through their difficulties, determined instantly to make an offer of his services to escort them to London, and not to leave them until he had deposited them in the hands of their relations. This he did in as delicate a manner as possible (for he feared to appear too forward), but at the same time with such a warmth of sincerity, that Aunt Fanny and

Mary both received immediate consolation from his proposal.

There was that in the frank character of Edward which inspired unlimited confidence, and ere a quarter of an hour had elapsed he formed a plan of proceedings for them which rendered the whole business of the journey easy and agreeable. He moreover made himself eminently useful in furthering Abel's instructions to old Cruikshank with regard to the disposal of the property ; and so indefatigable was he in his exertions, that on the third day after the receipt of Abel and Barbara's letters they were ready to take their departure. But before they did this, Fanny thought it right to take leave of their friends at Belvedere Hall, and accordingly drove there for the last time in the expiring splendour of their pony-chaise, with honest Brown for her coachman. Mary accompanied her ; and although a close observer might have observed a deep shade of melancholy on her countenance, still that did not diminish the brilliancy of her beauty or the charm of her natural and artless manners.

Those afflicted with extreme, and therefore inconvenient sensibility, would have remarked a tone of protection in the ladies of the family of Belvedere in their manner of reception, which marked how much the depression in Mexican securities acted upon their political horizon. Mrs. Woodby, in lieu of that large and well-expanded hand which she was wont to thrust forward in former greetings, was satisfied on this occasion to adopt the *monodactylon* form of recognition. The young ladies embraced without fervour; Miss Ellen scarcely went through the form towards Mary, for reasons easily to be guessed; whilst Anne allowed her affections for Aunt Fanny to be transferred to her bonnet, which part of her head-dress meeting that of the more aged spinster's resembled a shock of helmets rather than the recognition of friendship. As for Lady Thomson, she scarcely took any notice of them as they entered the room; for in her inmost thoughts she asserted that it was a duty she owed to herself on no occasion

to increase her acquaintance with those who were never likely to be of the least use to her. Tom Woodby, on the other hand, since the fall in their fortunes, had put himself forward as a great admirer of Mary, criticised her beauty and person with the disgusting tone of a libertine, and to all the vulgar raillery with which he was assailed by his sisters he only answered by a knowing shake of the head and a licentious leer.

When Aunt Fanny, in announcing their immediate departure, had entered into some particulars of that necessity which was now so well known to all the country, she excited the smiles and significant looks of her auditors, for she had been a theme of ridicule rather than an object of pity ever since the day of the ball and the family misfortune. She still endeavoured to make the whole occurrence pass off with high-minded indifference; and talked of mines, and securities, and Mexico, and her brother John, with that sort of air which might have made those believe, who did not know the true state of the case, that it

only required a petition to parliament to set the whole matter to rights. She also made known, with perhaps the same sort of air that a lady of fashion announces to her friends her having taken a house in Grosvenor-square, that her brother and sister had fixed upon *the* Golden-square (as she called it) as their future abode; never in the least suspecting that a place possessing so dazzling a name was scarcely even known in the polite circles.

“Golden-square!” exclaimed Mrs. Woodby; “is that anywhere near the Minorities?”

“I never heard of the name before,” said Anne; “it can’t be one of the fashionable squares.”

“Oh, indeed it is very fashionable,” said Fanny; “it is close to Silver-street!” giving her words an emphasis which denoted great topographical knowledge.

“I never heard of Silver-street either,” said Anne: “I wonder at which end of the town it is?”

“It is at neither end,” said Fanny, quite

bristling up ; “ it is in the middle, where it ought to be.”

“ Then I suppose it may be near one of the inns of court,” said Anne.

“ It is near no inn whatever,” said Fanny, still more irate ; “ it has nothing to do with an inn or the court of an inn. It is where all genteel people live, so Bab tells me ; and so Mark Woodcock told her, and he knows, for he has lived in London all his life.”

Poor Fanny only got herself well laughed at for her assertions, in the making of which she was mainly impelled by the desire of upholding the family dignities and advocating the measures taken by her brother and sister. During this discussion, the arrogant Tom had been endeavouring to engage Mary’s attention, inflating his insignificant person into as much importance as it was capable of assuming, and amusing her as he thought by malicious remarks upon persons of their acquaintance, in which sly calumnious hints at Edward Manby’s poverty, parentage, and dependent situa-

tion were not omitted, and purposely brought forward in order to produce comparison with his own great expectations and personal merits.

Mary and Fanny rose at the same time to take their leave, not very well pleased with the result of their visit ; although Mrs. Woodby and her daughters said that they hoped soon to meet in London, for that it was Mr. Woodby's intention to spend the next season there, as Ellen was to be brought out : and she added, " Since their last visit to Brighton, it became quite a matter of duty for them all to go to court, noticed as they had been by the king and queen."

Mr. Woodby, who had become shy of the Allnutts since the catastrophe in the Mexican funds, had designedly absented himself during this visit, fearing that he might be called upon to make explanations ; and when he heard that the country was likely to be clear of them for the future, and that their house and land were to be disposed of, he rejoiced, as it had been a favourite project of his to get possession of them, in order to complete the boundary of his estate.

Fanny and Mary having returned to Ivy-cote, nothing now further remained to be done than to make preparations for immediate departure. In the contemplation of their reduced circumstances, Abel had thought it right to discharge both old Betty and honest Brown; but when the moment of the ultimate migration arrived, old Betty announced that nothing would prevent her from accompanying Aunt Fanny and her niece; and that, if they could not afford to pay her wages, she would serve them for nothing, and wait like them with patience for better times.

This being agreed to, we will spare the reader the last parting from the beloved home of the Allnutts,—in which he would have sympathised with the grief of Mary and the deep regrets of Aunt Fanny, who, wandering about the house and premises with aching hearts, bade adieu to every spot as if taking leave of old friends,—and request him to exert his imagination in forming a succession of pictures in which the faded spinster with her niece by her side in the coach, with Edward Manby

assiduous and attentive to them both, with faithful Betty in the remaining corner, are first driving with reckless speed along the turnpike-road,—then catching hasty mouthfuls from tables spread at stated intervals,—then becoming jaded and way-worn at the close of day,—then nodding with unrefreshing slumbers during the night,—until at length the day having dawned, they are aroused from sleep by a friendly hand pointing to a dark, yellow, sluggish-looking mass of heavy vapour, and exclaiming: “There—there is London!”

At length the coach stopped in London itself; and whilst Fanny and Mary were opening their eyes at the strange things which surrounded them, and at the variety of new faces which were collected, on a sudden they were greeted by the sound of a well-known voice, and then, to their extreme joy, they saw Uncle Abel. Mary would have jumped into his arms, and almost screamed with delight; Fanny collected herself into as becoming an attitude as she could before so many strangers; while Edward Manby was unceasing in his ex-

ertions to collect their luggage, to satisfy the numerous demands for shillings and sixpences, and at length to deposit them in the hackney-coach which was to convey them to Golden-square.

We will not, for the present, advert to the thousand and one things which the brother, sisters, and niece, had to say to each other upon their first meeting; although in truth, admirers as we are of genuine feeling and unsophisticated nature in all its various shades and departments, we would willingly have collected their remarks, exclamations, sayings, and doings, for the gratification of those who might sympathise with us in our admiration; but we wish to put the reader right upon the state of feeling which existed between Mary and Edward.

From the commencement of their acquaintance to the present moment, their admiration had been progressive and reciprocal; and it had stopped at the point where lovers profess that they feel like brother and sister. Edward, however, had in truth proceeded be-

yond that point in his love, and so intense was his admiration, and genuine his sincerity, that we believe he would willingly have subjected himself to any test to prove it ; but the present forlorn situation of the family, and the position of Mary herself, who, without the sanction of her father, he knew would not bind herself to any one, combined to keep his feelings in check, and he restricted himself to demonstrations of the greatest devotion to her and to those who surrounded her. Mary, as we said before, watched over her feelings with circumspection ; but her prudence served only to smother a flame which might break out upon the first great excitement.

CHAPTER VI.

*Misfortune sharpens the wits. Need makes the old wife
to trot.*

BARBARA and Abel, ever since their settlement in Golden-square, held daily conferences upon what they could do in order to procure themselves the means of gaining an independent livelihood. When they came to cast up the result of their different capabilities, they ascertained that Barbara had excellent notions of cookery, and could make perfect pickles and preserves; that Fanny had a great knack at fancy-work, and showed much talent for the invention of pincushions; that Mary might, with some teaching, become a governess; and that Abel could undertake to teach the German flute.

Mark Woodcock had been called in to give

his opinion ; but his powers of invention were small, and did not reach beyond the mode of making attorneys and attorneys' clerks. However, when he exerted his recollection, it occurred to him that, by great exertion among his friends, he might possibly secure to Abel the situation of secretary to the club of Jolly Fellows, held weekly in a tavern in Covent Garden, where he would have an opportunity of forming a wide acquaintance which might assist him in his views. Abel was fearful that his abstemious habits would render him ineligible for the situation ; but still, rather than allow his sisters to starve, he was ready to undertake the necessary acts of conviviality : the scheme, however, was allowed to lie over for further consideration.

When Edward came, he also was asked to assist them with his suggestions ; for although he did not habitually live much in London, yet he was acquainted with its ways and means, and had acquired some knowledge of the literary market, in which he had occasionally been

himself a speculator. Happy would he have been to share his small pittance with his friends, for small indeed it was ; but his prospects also consisted mainly in his own ingenuity and industry ; and although for the present he was poor, yet still he hoped in time to hit upon some mode of gaining an independent livelihood. Having, like many young authors, made his first essays in the periodical publications of the day, he stated it as his opinion, that a very tolerable livelihood might be gained in literature, provided talent and industry went hand in hand ; and, moreover, furnished the direction of a bookseller living not far from Golden-square, who was ever ready to offer fair remuneration for the lighter kinds of composition,—poetry, tales, pointed anecdotes, or descriptive sketches. “ At least,” added Edward, “ I found him so disposed three years ago !”

This hint was sufficient to set the brains of the sisters, the brother, and the niece, immediately at work. They thought long and oft,

but nothing came. The process of sitting down to make a fortune without any more materials than a head, pen and ink, and a piece of paper, seemed to them so very simple that they all decided it was much more agreeable to do so than to cross the seas to dig for gold in Mexico. What so charming, thought they, as getting, in return for a few sheets of paper, pounds of gold! As for invention, knowledge, powers of description, judgment, and the various qualities of the mind requisite to the production of a successful work, they asserted that no one could know what share of them he possessed until he tried. Abel, for aught they knew, might prove a second Milton,—Barbara might shine forth as an Austin,—and Fanny rival Miss Edgeworth. It was amusing to remark the silence evident in the household since this suggestion of Edward Manby; every individual that composed it was deep in cogitation; each in their turn had “sunk from thought to thought a vast profound,” until their heads perfectly seemed to ache with cogitation.

Several days elapsed, and not a single idea had crossed the four collected heads of the family, when Aunt Bab one morning came out all radiant with joy from her bed-room asserting she had been visited by a happy inspiration during the night, — that by chance she had dreamt of roasted hare, and, as she awoke, she asked herself why she should not put into verse the whole of Mrs. Rundell's book upon cookery? She thought that such a work must be a desideratum in the world; for that it stood to reason it would be much easier for a cook to carry in mind the precepts which it contained in verse, than to retain them in prose. She said that she had been so much impelled by this thought that she could not refrain that very morning from trying her skill, and that she had selected Mrs. Rundell's recipe for making hare-soup (out of compliment to her dream) as her first essay. She had however found the truth of the saying, 'that dreams were to be interpreted by contraries,' for that in exerting her wits to the utmost, she could not get beyond the two first

lines, do all she could. She had succeeded thus far :

When hares are old, and fit for nothing else,
Then is your time to make them into soup.

But where the rhymes for *else* and *soup* were to be found she for one could not tell, therefore it stood to reason that she must try something else. She had been more successful in her second essay, it was on the subject of beef; the rhymes were easy and almost spoke for themselves. She thought she had succeeded, and that she might give it as a specimen of the whole work. Upon which she produced a fragment of paper, from which she read as follows :

TO STEW A RUMP OF BEEF.

Wash it well and season it hot,
Bind it, cram it in a pot ;
Fry three onions, put them to it,
Carrots, turnips, cloves and suet ;
With broth or gravy cover it up,
Put in your spoon and take a sup.
Soft and gentle let it simmer,
Then of port throw in a brimmer.
With judgment let the ketchup flow,
Of vinegar a glass bestow.

Simmer again for half an hour ;
Serve at six, and then devour.

Various were the observations made, and all seemed to say that it was much better than anything they could have expected from the sort of subject, which, to say the least, was not very poetic. Aunt Bab, in describing the process of composition, asserted that the book and its materials would be very much improved by being in verse—"For," said she, "in this very receipt, I have increased the excellence of the dish to be dressed, by adding an ingredient which it did not possess before—namely, suet. I wanted a rhyme for 'to it,' and up came 'suet' as a matter of course ; and therefore it stands to reason that I have added to its value."

Edward was mightily diverted by this essay, which he thought was quite original, and perhaps might hit the public taste, which he asserted was ever the first consideration in the mind of publishers. The most divine poem, the most learned disquisition, the profoundest research, the greatest compass of invention, he said, were

looked upon as so much refuse by the booksellers if they were not adapted to public taste.

“What then can be better adapted to the public taste,” said Aunt Bab, not giving those words the intellectual meaning which Edward had intended to convey, “than a book of cookery? It stands to reason that, with so many dishes described before him, everybody will find one at least to his taste.” She then announced her intention of going on with her work, and Edward promised that he would submit her labours to his friend the publisher as soon as she should have collected a few more specimens.

Not long after Barbara’s exposure of her plan, Uncle Abel was observed to be more than usually oppressed with thought; and it was remarked that he occasionally had recourse to scraps of paper upon which he wrote by snatches, and seemed to be intensely interested during that operation,—in fact, he exhibited every symptom of composing a poem. When he was spoken to, he did not answer; he became absent in mind, and, little heeding the

gross and dismal objects by which he was surrounded in the dark atmosphere of Golden-square, he appeared to breathe in an ideal world of his own creation. At length, one morning after breakfast, he announced that he had done his utmost to put together some lines which he conceived, with their approbation, he might submit to the publisher; and although he was quite diffident about their success, yet, having been impelled by what Edward Manby had said, and by the sense of their necessities, he had laboured hard to make himself a poet. "Read! read!" was exclaimed by all present.

"I wonder what he can have found to write about, in this dull hole!" said Fanny.

"I wish I could write something too!" said Mary despondingly.

"Read!" said Bab, putting on a most critical look.

Abel drew forth a paper, and read as follows:

ON INNOCENT PLEASURES.

Away for e'er, ye vain and vicious joys!
Ye haunts of vapid mirth and idle noise!

For me no more your revelry shall please,
Your banquets sicken, or your coxcombs tease.

“I see,” said Bab, with a sigh, “you have been thinking of our doings at Ivycote !”

But come, thou sober harmony of soul,—
The passions' bridle, and the heart's control ;
Come calm delights, pure as the heavenly ray,
Cheerful though serious, temperate though gay.
Oh ! how I love each simple scene to trace,
And from rude Nature snatch each artless grace ;
'Midst fields, and woods, and steepest wilds to rove,
Pause on each bank, and muse in every grove !
To watch the glimmerings of th' approaching day,
The solemn shades of dawn, the shooting ray,—
Nature all sparkling from the midnight rain,—
The long bright gleams that flash across the plain.
To meet the flocks free'd from th' impatient pen,
In fleecy train winding across the glen,
Whilst lowing herds, slow moving from the shed,
Break the still air, and o'er the pastures spread.
Or, at the evening's close, from some tall brow,
To mark the sun's retreat from all below,
The thin blue vapour's harmonising dye,
Blending the distant landscape with the sky—
To hear the pipe enlivening the vale,
And peals of laughter swelling on the gale,
For new delights each rural sound provokes—
The ploughman chiding loud his sturdy yokes—
The busy mill, and streams that dash along—
The shepherd's shout, the milkmaid's artless song—

The cock's response—the caw—the chattering jay—
The honest bark, and e'en the distant bray—

“Stop!” said Bab; “that won't do, Abel!”

These are thy joys, sweet Innocence; and these,
Where virtue fills the heart,—

“Stop!” again exclaimed Bab; “the bray will never do—how can you say that you have received pleasure from the bray of an ass? That alone will make the publisher reject your work.”

“I think that any sound, be it what it may,” said Abel, “which brings rural images before the mind, is pleasing; and therefore it appeared to me that I might class the bray with the other sounds which I have mentioned.”

“Nothing can reconcile me to a donkey's bray,” said Fanny.

“It was only this very morning,” said Mary, with great deference of manner, “that I heard an ass braying in the square; and I could almost have cried, it put me so much in mind of Mrs. Humphrey's donkey at dear Ivycote, with which we were all so well acquainted.”

“There!” said Abel; “Mary has explained

my meaning at once. It is not that the braying itself is an agreeable noise, but it is the association of ideas thus produced, which is the cause of the pleasurable feeling, and indeed one may say of all poetic feeling."

"Well," said Barbara, "you'll see I'm right, for it stands to reason that I am. We will refer to Edward Manby when he comes, and you'll see that he will say I'm right. How any poetry can be extracted from the bray of an ass, is to me incomprehensible!"

They argued for some time on this subject until they had thrown themselves into a sufficient degree of party heat; and when Edward Manby appeared, one and all they rushed towards him, each with a question on their tongue, of which the words "ass" and "braying" were heard distinctly above the rest. When he could sufficiently abate the violence of their zeal, and ascertain the object of dispute, like all moderators, he took the middle line, and said, "that for his part he must avow, that the braying of an ass in Golden-square appeared to him as much out of character as might be the

singing of Braham (let us say) in a field, or a farm-yard ; but that the one no more precluded the sweet recollections of rural life and scenery, than did the other the calling up the whole fascination of an opera-house."

With this all parties were satisfied, and harmony was restored, though not before Aunt Bab had insisted upon receiving Edward's opinion whether her own particular observations upon Abel's poem were well or ill founded. Edward read it over with much attention, and expressed himself quite satisfied with the propriety of the image which Abel had used, however low it might appear : he observed that the word 'neigh' might have been adopted instead of 'bray,' and would have answered the rhyme just as well ; but that the image which that word produced was rather of too elevated a character for the others which preceded it, and would have destroyed the humble and homely cast of the picture. Barbara gulped down no slight feeling of mortification at this decision against her judgment ; but she did not allow it to disturb her good feeling

towards him who pronounced it. On the contrary, when he proclaimed himself ready to proceed to the publisher in order to propose the two productions, hers and Abel's, for insertion in one of his next publications, she could not sufficiently express her gratitude; for if there be one feeling more impelling than another, it is the desire which every one has who has any pretensions to write, to see himself in print for the first time.

CHAPTER VII.

Writing for one's bread seldom answers unless one is bred to writing.

AUNT BARBARA having given the finish to some pathetic lines upon the best mode of scalding a sucking-pig, with a spirited address to those who are about to choose fish, presented them to Edward as he was about to conduct Abel to the publisher's, saying, "These specimens must do for the present, and will show what my intentions are."

Edward and Abel were about leaving the house, when Aunt Fanny came rushing after them flourishing a sheet of paper in her hand, and saying that she had just finished a tale which she hoped might be thought worthy of being added to the family productions: she avowed that it was a hasty sketch, and hoped

it might be classed among the light literature of the day. Edward, with the greatest good-nature, took it from her, and said that they had better read it before they proceeded further, and as it appeared short it would not take up much of their time. Without making any formal sitting, they stood round him whilst he read as follows :

“ THE STORY OF THE SWEET CURRANJEL,
AN EASTERN PRINCESS.

“ IN a deep sequestered wood, totally secluded from the busy haunts of men, and quite impossible to be pierced by the sun’s rays, lived the sweet Curranjel, in a most beautiful cottage entirely covered over with ivy entwined with honeysuckles, and darkened into the coolest freshness by the number of odoriferous plants which grew quite over her windows. She passed her whole existence in sitting on a mossy bank, tending a lovely little lamb, white as the driven snow, which she always kept beautifully washed with the best brown Windsor soap, and tied with a pink riband to her waist ;

whilst she held a crook in her hand and read a book with the other. She was always dressed in the cleanest white muslin pelisse imaginable, with pink ribands and bows in her sleeves and round her waist, and with a lovely Leghorn hat on her head, and white kid gloves. She was so extremely beautiful, that everybody who saw her, as they passed by, would turn round and stare at her, and say to themselves, ‘La ! I wonder who is that ?’ Although she never stirred from the repose of her luxurious residence, yet she was the talk and admiration of all the neighbourhood ; and people would come from a great distance just to steal a peep at her from behind the trees, and dodge round and round just to get one single glimpse of her astonishingly powerful coal-black eyes. One day, as the sweet Curranjel was partaking of a cold collation by the side of a murmuring stream, composed of some nice clouted cream, with some raspberry jam in it, and some very nice macaroon biscuits, to her great surprise all of a sudden her dear innocent little lamb made a jump, and breaking its pink

riband from her waist, ran away. She was puzzled at first what to do with her clouted cream and macaroons; but at length, with great presence of mind, she laid them down upon the bank, and like a young mountain goat, fleetier than the winds, she took to her legs and ran after her innocent little lamb. She had not run many steps, when, just as she turned round a corner, she perceived straight before her a most accomplished young Eastern prince, extremely handsome, with auburn hair curling all over his head, teeth of astonishing whiteness, and with piercing eyes darting from behind an aquiline nose, and very red downy cheeks. He was dressed in the most beautiful manner in a Polish dress, with tassels hanging from his curiously embroidered cap, and held a flageolet in his hands, upon which he could play divinely. She stopped in the greatest confusion,—he stopped in utter dismay. She looked away and down on the ground at the same time,—he stole side-glances at her, but dared not speak. They would have remained so for a long time, perhaps to

this very hour, had not the little innocent lamb come bleating and hopping by ; when the sweet Curranjel, forgetting her awkward situation, made a dart forward to seize the pink riband ;—the youth also made a dart forward to seize the lamb ;—and these two darts having brought them close together, they stood close to each as if they had been fixed by one dart :—there they stood, the innocent lamb between them, the picture of virtuous love and Arcadian simplicity. Their respective breasts heaved—their respective tongues faltered — the lamb bleated, until, overcome by the intensity of his feelings, the young stranger at length exclaimed with the most impassioned accents, ‘ I love thee !’ which struck with such deep vibrations in the inmost heart of the sweet Curranjel, that she, no longer able to contain her emotions, answered in these simple but expressive words : ‘ Do you ?’ and the lamb being an emblem of the purity of their affections, they were immediately married by a Roman Catholic priest who lived in an adjoining cell, and were very happy ever after.”

Edward scarcely knew which way to look after reading this specimen of Fanny's idea of an Eastern tale. Fearful of hurting her feelings, he composed his features as well as he could into proper gravity, and assured her that he would offer it to the notice of the publisher, and without more ceremony, accompanied by Abel, he led the way to his habitation. In his recollection it had been a mean-looking shop; but when he approached the spot, to his surprise he found a front so ornamented, glazed, and painted—so resplendent from without with the promise of every literary luxury within, that he scarcely ventured to enter. When he did so, instead of those overlaid counters and dusty shelves which he well recollected, he found a handsome apartment, carpeted, decked with mahogany counters, glittering with books in brilliant bindings, and exhibiting a magnificence which bespoke what in fact was very nearly the truth, that all the genius of the times was rather expended upon the surface of things than upon their intrinsic merits.

Edward, followed by Abel, was introduced into a small sanctum, still more beautifully fitted up than the main shop, where, seated at a handsome table covered with papers, books, and manuscripts, sat in great state, and in a handsome easy chair, the owner and director of the establishment.

When Edward first knew him, he was all smiles and welcome ; his appearance at that time was without pretensions, and there was a musty complexion on whatever surrounded him, very different from his looks at the present moment ; for now everything wore the appearance of gentility — he was dressed with the most scrupulous precision, and might have vied in appearance with the great of the land. Instead of wearing a soft and supplicating look, he now appeared to be on the defensive, — he was buttoned up and mysterious—he had adopted the manners of one given to protection. When Edward was introduced ; he scarcely rose from his seat, and then formally offered him and Abel chairs. Scarcely acknowledging that he had known Edward

before, when the business of the visit was explained, he immediately put on a doubting face, and after considerable hesitation, turning over the papers which had been put into his hand, said "These sort of things did very well some time ago; but we do nothing now but what is high—quite tip-top."

"Ah! I suppose that the world has been so accustomed to read the beauties of Byron," said Edward, "that it can bear nothing else. I am afraid, if that be the case, our productions can have but little chance."

"It is not that I mean," said the publisher: "pray may I ask who is the author of these things?"

"This gentleman, Mr. Abel Allnutt, is one," said Edward, pointing to his companion, "and his sisters, the Miss Allnutts, are the others."

"They will not do," said the publisher; "we deal entirely now with the nobility and with persons whose names are known in the world. I never heard of Allnutt before—it has never been before the public in any shape."

"But why should not these productions

stand upon their merit alone, and not upon the name of the author?" said Edward.

"Merit is all very well in its way," said the publisher; "but who waits now-a-days to find it out? The publications in which these sort of things appear, require no merit but that of names; and when my Lord This, or the Duchess That, condescends to write, it is taken for granted that there is merit. Why, sir, I make no doubt that if the chancellor of the exchequer would appear as the editor of a new edition of Cocker's Arithmetic, or if I could induce the lord chancellor to write a history of the great *seal* which is now exhibiting at Pidcock's, and put his name to it—I am confident that I could make a great deal of money by such a speculation."

"Then, sir, am I to understand," said Edward, "that you publish nothing which has not got a great name attached to it?"

"We give money for nothing else," said the publisher: "we pay in proportion to the position of the author, and I fear that we can afford nothing in the present instance."

Upon which, regaining possession of their proffered productions, they took their leave, Abel from the beginning of the conference having given up all hope of obtaining success in the literary line, and determined to turn his thoughts to other things.

Upon reaching home he found a letter from Cruikshank, which he and his sisters had been expecting with great anxiety, for its contents were likely to be of considerable consequence, inasmuch as it would inform them of the result of the sale at Ivycote. The sum which thereby they were to realise would form their only visible means of subsistence for the present, and therefore the amount of it became a matter of intense interest. They conceived their calculation to be much within the mark when they fixed a moderate sum as the amount of their expectations ; but what was their mortification, and we may add, their consternation, when they found that the money which Cruikshank had to remit to their bankers but very little exceeded half that sum !

Exaggerated expectations are always sure

to produce exaggerated disappointments. Because the cow and the pigs had been sold to Mr. Woodby at half the price which Aunt Bab had expected, she immediately exclaimed that there must have been some foul play in favour of the rich man; and when they discovered by Cruikshank's accounts that the wash-tubs and laundry gear had been knocked down to the Silvertops literally for nothing, they were sure that the auctioneer must have played some trick, because they well recollected that the Thickentales always said how much they longed to have them. There was no end to the discussions, the endless remarks, and the gossip produced in Golden-square by the sale which had taken place at Ivycote. Old Betty raised lamentations that were heard all over the house, because the new coal-skuttle which she had bought only a month before they came away for twelve shillings, had been sold for three and sixpence; and Aunt Fanny would not allow herself to be consoled, because Mrs. Humphries, the school-mistress, had got the parlour looking-glass;

for she said, “what business could she have with a looking-glass? and was it not setting a bad example to the girls, if they ever saw her inspecting her ugly face in it?”

Were not the subject too important to the well-being of our simple friends to be turned into a joke, we would willingly continue to amuse our readers with all the circumstances resulting from this event. Abel’s courage almost fell to despondency when he looked into the state of their affairs and the difficulties of their situation. The rent alone of their lodging would swallow up a great portion of their means: although they lived as sparingly as possible, allowing themselves nothing but the merest necessities, still those inexorable things called weekly bills came round with despotic exactitude, and lessened their store in spite of the most rigid economy. Abel always endeavoured to bring back his mind to that steady repose in the ways of Providence which he had ever cherished, whenever he found it deviating into anxious apprehensions for the future; but with all his philosophy

he could not help feeling downcast and oppressed. He did his utmost to appear cheerful before his sisters and niece, and talked with confidence of what might be done in a city so full of resources as London ; but when left to himself, his true feelings would break out, and the only mode of relief he could devise was to walk about the streets, and so endeavour to dissipate his mind from the distracting contemplation of his necessities.

The defeat of their literary scheme had not made the deep impression which perhaps it otherwise would, owing to the matter of major importance contained in Cruikshank's letter ; but that subject having been discussed with Edward Manby at the same time as the other, he thus, indeed, became a party concerned in this and in everything which related to the family. He entered heart and soul in the discussion of every question as if he were a member of it, and thus day after day, and almost hour after hour, he passed his time in company with the object of his affections, until his whole being was so identified with

her image that he could scarcely live out of her presence.

In misfortune, springs of action are touched which in the flush of prosperity are not heeded. Sympathies are then created ; whereas, in the sunshine of happiness, the heart is too apt to conclude that no distress can exist. Mary's feelings melted into gratitude towards Edward when she reflected how great and visible was the support which he afforded her uncle and aunts in these their days of misfortune ; — his frank and smiling face came amongst them like a warm gleam acting upon a cheerless gloom : difficulties which appeared insurmountable, when they came to be talked over with him were deprived of half their perplexity ; he always looked upon the brightest side of things—a quality of the mind which, in truth, can be outbalanced by no power of wealth.

It was impossible for two such beings to meet so constantly, and under the peculiar circumstances which drew them together, without mutually feeling those sentiments which, in the

hearts of the virtuous and the high-principled, tend to develop the noblest qualities of the heart. Mary would frequently confide to Edward her desire to make herself useful to her family by hiring herself out as a governess, and she modestly hinted that what she wanted in abilities, she might make up in assiduity and attention to her duties. "She was ready," she said, "to go for the smallest stipend, provided that stipend went to her relations; and by this means waiting for some favourable turn in their affairs, she hoped to ward off that desperate want which might assail them if something were not done." Edward opposed this with all his might. As soon as he could be of use, he insisted that his services might be made available. He did not depend, it is true, upon himself; but still his uncle at Liverpool, to whom he looked up from every feeling of affection and duty, was generous and ever ready to listen to any reasonable scheme that he might propose, and he trusted that through his means something would be struck out which might at

least relieve them from the more immediate horrors of poverty.

These struggles of generosity did not fail to feed the flame of that pure love which was burning within their breasts; and although neither dared to own its existence, still it now formed as much a part of their being as the breath which came from their nostrils, or as the blood which circulated in their veins.

CHAPTER VIII.

*One of the distresses incidental to human life are poor cousins.
Happy they who go through the world so unafflicted!*

THE Allnutts in Golden-square lived totally ignorant of what was going on in the world, and even more so than in their seclusion at Ivy-cote. They knew no one—they never read a newspaper, and they were too much absorbed in brooding over their own calamities to care about politics, or to heed the hard race that was running between the two parties which then divided the country. Mark Woodcock was the only man who occasionally paid them a visit. Like every one who had ever seen Mary, he too had been captivated by her beauty; and whenever he could steal from his

desk at Lincoln's Inn, he would always contrive some good pretext for visiting Golden-square. One morning he came earlier than usual, and as he entered the room where the family were assembled, he exclaimed in a tone of exultation, "Well, have you heard the news?"

"What news?" said Aunt Bab.

"Why, the change of ministry, to be sure," said Mark: "the Tories have served it out properly, and the Whigs are floored." Upon which he explained himself in as intelligible a jargon as he could command, and exhibited a list of the new ministers as it stood proclaimed in a morning paper.

Little did either Barbara, Fanny, or Abel, and Mary still less, heed what he was propounding, or give ear to the names of the persons appointed to fill the different offices of the state, which he read *seriatim* with great emphasis. Their attention, however, was arrested when they heard him say, "Minister for foreign affairs, Earl of Knutsford."

"Abel! did you hear that?" exclaimed Barbara.

“ I did indeed,” said Abel ; “ but what then ? ”

“ What then ? ” cried Bab : “ a great deal, to be sure ! Why you are an Allnutt as well as he, — and why should he not help us ? ”

“ I see no good reason why, I am sure,” said Abel, smiling, “ if *he* does not.”

“ If *he* does not ! ” said Barbara,—“ and wherefore should he ? If he does not know how near we are related, he must be informed of it ; and then I am sure, if he possesses one ounce of the blood of an Allnutt within his veins, he will be too happy to help us.”

“ I for one,” said Abel, “ am ignorant how nearly we are related. I have always heard that we were of the same family as Lord Knutsford ; but of the particulars of the relationship I know nothing.”

“ Then I ’ll tell you how it is,” said Bab, “ for I have often heard our dear father speak upon that subject. The present Lord Knutsford’s father and our father had each of them three great-grandmothers.—No, that is not it,—that is, that the first Lord Knutsford had

three wives, and they each had children ; therefore there were established three great-grand-fathers,—no, I mean three great-grandmothers. Well, each of these great-grandmothers had grandchildren——”

“ They had children too, I am sure of that,” said Fanny.

“ I am not quite certain of that,” said Bab : “ however, that has nothing to do with the matter, because it stands to reason that if they had grandchildren, those children must have had fathers, anyhow. Therefore, as the present Lord Knutsford’s father and our father had each of them the same great-grandfather, although a different great-grandmother, they came from the same stock, and as we are children of our father, we come from the same stock too, and we become cousins, but of what numerical affinity, as our dear father would say, (and so would John too,) I really do not know.”

“ But still,” said Fanny after a moment of deep thought, “ if the great-grandmothers were different, the great-grandchildren must

be different too, and they can only be great-grandcousins on the father's side; and that's what Lord Knutsford is to us."

"There's no father's side or mother's side in cousins—they are all of one side," said Bab with great quickness in her accent.

"Well, then, I am sure," said Fanny, "if we are all on the same side, the present Lord Knutsford ought to do something for us, and Abel ought to apply to him immediately."

"Yes, he ought," said Bab, "and will too. Let us see—Minister for foreign affairs—that is to say, that he can do all he likes about foreigners, Frenchmen, Turks, Spaniards, and East Indians,—ay, and with Mexicans too. He may appoint John to direct the mines: and he could make Abel, I dare say, a Roman consul if he chose it."

"Not a consul," said Fanny, "for the ancient Greeks only did that; but I dare say he might make him an ambassador, anyhow."

"I fear, my dear," said Abel, "that you are too sanguine in your hopes; but this I do think, that through his influence he may per-

suade the Mexican republic either to pay us back the capital which we have put into their funds, or at least continue to pay us the interest for it. This would not be much to ask from a distant cousin."

"That of course," exclaimed Bab; "is the least he can do for us: but he must do a great deal more, that's what he must. Let us ask Edward Manby what he can do;—I dare say he will know, as he does most things."

Mark Woodcock, after having created the sensation we have just described, took his leave, or, as he would say, "cut his stick;" and not long after appeared Edward, who was soon informed of the prospects which had all at once dawned upon the family. Having been asked in every sort of tone of inquiry what were the powers of a minister for foreign affairs, he professed general ignorance upon the subject; but he ventured to say what he thought he could not do.

When Barbara asserted that he ought to appoint John to be the director of all the Mexican mines, he answered that as mining specula-

tions were private or joint-stock speculations, they of course appointed their own officers, and that the king's minister could have no voice on the subject *ex officio*. Then, as to making the republic refund, he was obliged to destroy the castle which Abel had built, inasmuch as the government professed to take no part in foreign loans. But he thought that Fanny's scheme of making Abel a consul was more in his power than either of the two others; and therefore expressed it as his opinion that Abel might boldly venture to apply to him for some appointment of that sort, or for something at home.

This dictum of Edward's immediately became the subject of all their thoughts and the theme of all their talk. Barbara, little understanding the gradations of diplomatic rank and service, insisted upon it that they ought not to demand the consulship at first, as that might be too much — but that perhaps they might begin by making Abel a simple ambassador.

Fanny was soon in the clouds, and had al-

ready settled in her mind the foreign princes and counts who would be quarrelling among themselves to make an offer of their hand; whilst Mary sighed at the possibility of being separated from Edward. Abel, however, still steadily kept his eye upon their money in the Mexican funds, hoping that, being restored to it, he might again return to his beloved country retirement. But the result of their conference was, that Abel should present himself to Lord Knutsford, and making known his relationship, state the situation of his family and ask for some sort of employment.

In order to put this scheme into execution, it was necessary to make Abel a little more presentable in his appearance than he usually was; for, with the view of economising to the utmost farthing, he did not allow himself the smallest luxury in dress. His sisters obliged him to have his hair cut, a new cravat was provided for the occasion, he exhibited a larger expanse of white linen than usual, and his coat was inspected, mended, newly buttoned and

brushed. The day having been fixed for putting his scheme into execution, the whole family were busied in preparing him at least to look well. His boots were well polished, and with Aunt Bab's chain round his person, and with Fanny's best pocket-handkerchief in his pocket, he at length sallied forth, accompanied by Edward, to seek the regions of Downing-street, where the new minister was known to transact the business of his office.

When they came in sight of the sentry stationed at the door, Edward left Abel, who, as soon as he found himself alone, immediately felt possessed of new energies. He passed the sentry, and, with his heart in a flutter, opened the door, walked in, and being confronted with the porter, boldly enquired whether he could see Lord Knutsford. The porter, to his surprise, received him with becoming civility, and introducing him into the waiting-room, asked him for his card,—an article which owing to Edward's foresight he was enabled to give. "Mr. Abel Allnutt, Golden-square," was inscribed thereupon in all proper form; and

when the porter looked at it, Abel thought that his face betrayed approbation.

Having taken possession of an arm-chair, he sat for some time well satisfied to have an opportunity to collect his thoughts. He settled in his mind everything that he would say to his cousin; — first the passing hint of their relationship, and the short history of his branch of the family; then his brother John's schemes, and particularly the one which at his instigation they had adopted, of transferring their fortune from the English to the Mexican funds; then the ruin that ensued thereupon—the sale of their house at Ivycote—their migration to Golden-square—their present difficulties, and consequently their recurrence to his assistance. He was disturbed in his cogitations every now and then by some one putting his head within the door and drawing it out again; but otherwise he was left entirely to himself, and for so long a time, that he began to feel uneasy lest all was not as it should be. However, after he had sat two hours and a half, suddenly a well-dressed man

entered, and calling him by name, invited Abel to follow him. Instantly all his coolness and self-possession forsook him — his heart beat strong, and he followed his conductor in a great state of perturbation, so entirely new was he to such scenes. He was conducted across halls, through passages, up and down staircases, into rooms, and at length came to a door which was opened with a certain degree of deference by his conductor, and soon he found himself in the presence of one whom he took for Lord Knutsford.

The person before whom he stood was one calculated to produce awe in the breast of a mere man of the fields more by the manner in which he was surrounded than by his own personal appearance. He was seated before a large and massive writing-table, heaped over with every implement of writing that the imagination can conceive : papers of every description lay about in heaps, some carefully tied up with red tape, and others open as if under inspection. Every contrivance for the assortment and classification of letters and

documents was here seen ; whilst innumerable leather-covered boxes of every size, colour, and denomination were strewed about in heaps ready for use. In distant corners of the room sat two other persons apparently absorbed in the papers before them ; whilst the chief was at his post ready to superintend the work that was going forward. He was a man of pleasant aspect and agreeable manners, and when Abel approached, received him with as much politeness and urbanity as if he were honoured by his visit.

There was an appearance of mystery and secrecy in this apartment so pregnant with business, so fitted up with everything relating to matters of serious import, that Abel's heart quite sank within him when he recollected the insignificance of his own poor affairs. All his preconcerted speech fled from his memory ; he made an awkward bow, and mechanically seated himself on the chair which was presented to him. He was, however, so much relieved by the ease and charm of manner in the person who received him, that he

began after a short pause to find himself restored to his self-possession. Still taking the individual before him for Lord Knutsford, and thinking that in him he saw a relation, he very soon entered upon the history of his family, and went into a series of intricate details relating to the different individuals composing it, which he thought might be interesting matter of information. He was beginning to touch upon the histories of his brother and sisters, when his auditor gradually led him off the subject to inquire what might be the real object of his visit.

Abel, having acquired confidence, was not disconcerted, and giving a simple statement of his personal difficulties, he asked for employment — in short, for a situation under government. The gentleman having heard him out with exemplary patience, considering that he was not Lord Knutsford, and therefore little interested in the Allnutt genealogy, then addressed him in a few words,—told him of the immense number of applications with which the government was beset for places, descanted

upon the pain of public functionaries in being constantly obliged to refuse the claims of merit, avowed how happy he would be to serve him were it in his power, said something about private family claims — “a subject,” he said, “upon which he was not competent to judge,” — and with a variety of agreeable-sounding words, accompanied by smiles and a slight though gradual pressure towards the door, he succeeded in guiding Abel to that orifice ; into which having once successfully secured him, he made him a bow, and the door shutting Abel on the out side and himself within, the conference thus came to an end.

Having once more reached the street, Abel walked down it with a slow and thoughtful step. He had gained nothing by his visit excepting the certainty of the loss of his former hopes ; nor was he quite certain whether or not he had seen Lord Knutsford. During the visit, he considered himself as being in his presence ; but when it was over, he recollected certain occurrences which made him doubt whether it might not have been somebody else. In this

state of perplexity he returned home but little pleased with the result of his morning's work, and almost afraid to meet Barbara and the inquiries which she would not fail to make. But there was one thing which he was not afraid to encounter—and that was the scrutiny of his own breast. There, amid all the cares, the disappointments, and the vexations which surrounded him, he was sure to find a still, small voice, which, as it were, from the inmost recesses of his soul would speak the language of comfort and encouragement, and tell him to persevere to the last.

CHAPTER IX.

Abel Allnutt offers himself for a tutor, and proves the disadvantage of homely looks.

As soon as Abel rapped at the door, Mary, who had learned to recognise his mode of announcing himself, cried out, "Oh, here is Uncle Abel!" and he very soon after appeared.

"Well, Abel, what has happened?" cried Barbara.

"What sort of a looking man is he?" said Fanny.

"My dear uncle," said Mary, "I am afraid you want something to eat — you look sadly tired!"

Abel was inclined to say but little; Bab, however, soon let him know that he had much to undergo. "Have you seen Lord Knutsford?" she said.

“ I believe I have,” said Abel ; “ but really I cannot say for certain whether I have or not.”

“ You *believe* you have !” exclaimed Barbara. “ How ! do you only believe ?—arn’t you certain that you have seen him ?”

“ I was introduced to a most agreeable man whom I took for him. I told him the whole of our story—I talked to him of our family, and initiated him into all our family matters : he heard me patiently. I conceived all the while that I was talking to Lord Knutsford ; but when he remarked, ‘ that as for family claims, he was not competent to judge of them,’ and informed me that owing to the great number of prior applicants I had no chance of employment, I began to suspect that he was not our cousin ; and somehow or other, agreeable and pleasant though he was, in some unaccountable manner I suddenly found myself without the door. That is all that I can say for myself.”

“ Well, I never heard the like of this !” exclaimed Barbara. “ You spoke to a man for

half an hour, and you say you do not know who he was ! How did he look ? It stands to reason that an earl and a minister must be different in appearance to other men. Did he not wear robes and garters, as we hear they all do ?”

“ He looked exactly like any other man,” said Abel, “ only a great deal more polite. I felt somehow entirely at my ease before him, and could not help being pleased with him, although he told me that he could do nothing for us.”

“ Then certainly he was not our cousin the earl,” said Bab. “ You must have been taken in by some swindler — some one must have practised a hoax upon you—that is quite clear: an earl has always a silver star on his breast and a large riband over his shoulder—his hair is always well-powdered—he always wears silk-stockings, and a sword by his side. Now, if you did not see such a man, it stands to reason that you have been hoaxed.”

“ All I can say is this,” said Abel,—“ that when I walked in, I asked the servant for Lord

Knutsford : he seemed very well to know who he was. Then I waited two hours and a half in a room by myself ; and afterwards, I was taken into another room, where I saw a courteous gentleman, and him I took to be our cousin."

" You may be certain that during those two hours and a half," said Bab, " the hoax was got up against you : I wish Edward Manby were here—he'd tell you the same thing. Nothing can be so wicked as these Londoners—you know that Mark Woodcock has warned us against them ; and notwithstanding the lesson you got from that odious woman of the Fleece and her Punch, here you are the first to fall a prey to their tricks."

" I doubt very much," said Abel, " whether the gentleman I saw could act like a swindler if he were to try, he was so well bred."

" I recollect very well," said Bab, " when I was a little girl, going to the family seat and seeing the family pictures ; and all the Earls of Knutsford were dressed in the manner I have described, only some had robes and garters on. It is quite plain you did not see the present

lord.—But here comes Edward, and he will enlighten us.”

Edward arrived in anxious expectation to hear the result of Abel’s visit ; and when the progress of it was related to him, he said at once that he could not have seen Lord Knutsford, but evidently had been taken to the under secretary of state, for he recollected that a friend of his had told him that he had been treated in the selfsame manner at the Foreign Office.

Barbara would not be satisfied with this explanation, but insisted upon her view of the hoax being the right one ; whilst Aunt Fanny immediately instituted a general inquiry upon under secretaries of state, and endeavoured to ascertain whether they were all as agreeable as the one Abel had described, and where they could be seen.

A strong principle of action founded upon a right basis is like the beacon to which the mariner returns when he is out of his reckoning, in order to take a fresh departure. Abel cherished that species of hope within his breast

which was not to be extinguished by disappointment: he was confident, although the aspect of his affairs was at present dark and threatening, that sooner or later it would brighten up and give him happier days. But still he was distressed at his total want of success, which he would have borne with greater fortitude, had he no other cause of anxiety; but his mind was disturbed by apprehension at not hearing from John. Since the account of his arrival at Vera Cruz, not a line had been received from him; there were no tidings of him in the City among the Mining Companies; and although he was supposed to be on his way back, yet nothing certain concerning his movements had been ascertained.

Edward scarcely ever passed a day without making inquiries upon that head, so anxious was he to bring consolation to Mary, who, ever since she had contemplated the possibility of soon seeing her father, could scarcely think of anything else. In the mean while, the small sum which the family had in store for their

immediate necessities was daily diminishing, and they looked with dread upon the day when the rent of their lodging would be due.

The family frequently discussed their miseries and their schemes in the presence of Mark Woodcock, who, being a good-hearted, serviceable youth, took great interest in their welfare. Some time after the failure we have just described, he one morning came in great haste to inform Abel that his chief, Mr. Fairfax by name, a solicitor of eminence, had been desired by one of his clients, a man of fortune, to seek a tutor for his sons, and conceiving that the situation might suit him, he had requested Mr. Fairfax's permission to make him an offer.

The proposal was received with the greatest joy by Aunt Bab, who, looking upon Abel as a property of which she might dispose without an appeal to his will, would have agreed to it upon the spot, had she not been stopped by Abel. His conscience always chose to become very tender whenever it was required of him to assert his own merits, and accordingly on this

occasion he avowed that he did not feel himself qualified to undertake such an office.

“ Give me one good reason for your refusal,” said Barbara, “ and I will urge the matter no more.”

“ I am not sufficiently well educated myself to be able to teach others,” said Abel : “ I cannot set up for a tutor when I am myself untutored.”

“ How can you say that !” said Bab. “ You know very well that I myself taught you to read and write ; and as for your Latin, I am sure you know enough of that at any rate to puzzle Merriman our schoolmaster ; not to mention your flute.”

Mark put an end to this discussion by asserting that the gentleman in question was more anxious to secure a trustworthy person who would look after the morals and conduct of his pupils, than one who could teach Latin and Greek ; and again expressed his own opinion, as well as that of his chief, that the place would exactly suit Abel : the salary would be handsome, the labour small, and the

youths were reputed to be everything that was desirable.

Under such circumstances, Abel could no longer object to the proposal, and he begged to know when and where he could present himself. In making this decision, his self-devotion may perhaps be appreciated by those who reflect what had been the happiness of his former life, and what is too frequently the lot of a tutor ; who, often with the feelings and education of a gentleman, drops, as it were, from the clouds into a family circle, and straightway forms a sort of connecting link between the master and the domestics—belonging to neither class, but partaking of the nature of both ; — who in the midst of society is generally left in solitude, whose only associates are his pupils, and who, besides, is often the victim of caprice and malevolence. To meet such a prospect requires great magnanimity, when the motives which impel him who accepts of the situation are similar to those which actuated Abel. He perhaps did not know all he was about to encounter ; but this

he foresaw,—that he would be separated from those who were dearer to him than life — that he would be obliged to acquire new habits, and conform himself to the wishes of others, when he felt that he would fall very far short of the expectations that might be entertained of his abilities.

However, upon receiving a notification from Mr. Fairfax of the name and address of the person to be visited, he prepared himself for the ordeal he was likely to undergo with all the courage he could muster. Mary almost cried when she saw him sally forth in quest of this situation, so fearful was she of a separation; and Barbara hoped that the necessity for this step would only be temporary; whilst Fanny consoled herself with the hope of making new acquaintances.

Abel reached a large handsome house in Portland-place just as the clock struck ten: he had been told to call early, and as he always rose himself at seven, he thought that hour must be quite proper. He was received by a footman and introduced into the dining-

room without perceiving the smallest circumstance of distinction in his mode of reception. He was requested to wait until the master should be apprised of his arrival : this was but a short interval, for the same servant again appeared and desired him to follow. He accompanied him up stairs to the drawing-room floor, and thence to the bed-rooms ; and without further ceremony was introduced into a dressing-room, in which were displayed all the apparatus and preliminaries of a toilet. At the farther end stood a tall man, dressed in a morning gown, who apparently had just risen from bed. When he saw Abel, he made him no sort of compliment, but kept him for a moment in attendance whilst he adjusted part of his dress, and then said, “ Well, are you ready ? ”

Abel looked astonished ; but as humility was his great characteristic, he thought that it was the usual fate of tutors to be treated with contumely, and answered, “ Yes, sir, I am ready—I am at your service.”

“ So am I,” said the gentleman : “ I wish that you had come at least a week ago.”

“I did not know of your wishes before yesterday,” said Abel, “or I should have been happy to have waited upon you.”

“You are not to blame,” said the other; “but they have grown uncommonly this week past, and wanted your assistance.”

Abel again was surprised — How was it possible, thought he, that his pupils could have grown so much in so short a space of time; and why was his assistance so immediately necessary! “Have they?” said Abel. “I hope we shall soon make up for lost time!”

“I hope you will,” said the gentleman, who all this while seemed taken up in the inspection of his feet, which were naked and only protected from the ground by a slipper. “They will require all your skill, I can tell you,” said he, “for they are very difficult to deal with.”

“I will do my best,” said Abel, beginning to be more and more surprised at this sort of preliminary talk, and which he expected would lead to some severe examination.

“You are come prepared, I hope?” said the

gentleman, turning round upon him and looking well at him.

“ Yes, sir,” said Abel : “ I hope that you will approve of me.”

Upon which the other, taking one foot from out of his slipper, tossed it into the air, and twirling it about, said to the astonished Abel, “ You see, they are good large ones !”

“ Yes,” said Abel with awkward hesitation, —“ Yes, they are large ;”—but not able in the least to understand what a man’s feet could have to do with a tutor’s duty.

“ Well, sir,” said the gentleman, “ begin.”

“ Begin what ?” said Abel, doubting the sanity of the individual’s brain, and taking possession of the handle of the door, as a precaution.

“ Begin what !” said the other : “ why, to cut, to be sure !—Come, sir ! cut away,—cut them off at once !”

“ Cut away !—Cut what ?” said Abel ; when seeing the gentleman flourish the other foot and walk towards him, he no longer doubted that he had got into the house of a madman,

and straightway rushing out, shut the door after him, ran down stairs with all possible speed without once looking behind, and gaining the principal entrance, got into the street with the activity of one pursued. Neither looking to the right nor left, he only stopped when he reached his own door; and then, quite out of breath, finding himself face to face with his sisters and niece, to their utter astonishment, he burst out a-laughing. This, so rare an occurrence, produced an uncommon sensation among them, and they in their turn thought a temporary derangement must have seized him. They gathered round with anxious faces,—for ill timed merriment seldom produces sympathy,—and began to inquire the cause of his so speedy return and of his extraordinary conduct.

After some little time, having at length collected his scattered ideas, he gave a full and complete narration of his adventure, the result of which puzzled his hearers as much as it had done himself.

“He was preparing to kick you down stairs?” said Bab.

“ What could he mean by flourishing about his nasty naked feet ?” said Fanny.

“ I am so glad you’re come back to us !” said Mary.

Had they, however, been acquainted with the real story, they too, perhaps, would have been partakers of Abel’s merriment, although it would have been at his expense ; for be it known that the worthy gentleman in Portland-place had made an appointment with his corn-cutter at the very hour that Abel arrived, and as Abel’s appearance, without any great stretch of imagination, might very well have made him pass for what our French neighbours have dignified by the name of *artiste pédecure*, it is not extraordinary that the footman took him for that useful personage, and that his master adopted the mistake. It never occurred to them for a moment that Abel was the tutor announced by Mr. Fairfax, for he did not look like one ; and besides, so exalted a person would not have appeared so early, and would have been announced more emphatically. Even when he made his abrupt exit, the mis-

take was not discovered; for the gentleman in question actually remained with one leg in the air with surprise, and concluded, in his turn, that the corn-cutter had suddenly run clean out of his wits,—and as he thought that he might be running all day, so he took no trouble to run after him.

CHAPTER X.

The family are both cheered and mortified in their misfortunes. A lesson on economy.

THE situation of the Allnutts may be compared to that of a crew in a ship becalmed under the line, their provisions running short, with every prospect of starvation before their eyes should the calm continue. They felt the same sort of despondency, the same apprehensions of being reduced to great straits, and the same hope of some favourable gale springing up which would drive them out of their present embarrassment and take them into more favourable latitudes. The merriment which we recorded in our last chapter was of short duration: it only served to make the

despondency which succeeded more deep, and they daily more and more began, as it were, to touch their future destiny. Spring had now advanced;—the few black bushes in the enclosure before them, as if to put them in mind that Nature, which they all so ardently adored, was immutable in her work, and dispensed her gifts to the wretched as well as to the prosperous, began to exhibit a new dress; and the vivid green starting out of the smoky branches appeared as the work of a miracle, were it not that a miracle of every-day occurrence is no longer such in the eyes of unthinking mortals.

Mary was standing at the window, sighing over the recollections of Ivycote, admiring the beautiful colour as it burst forth almost perceptibly to the sight, and hoping that by some kind dispensation of Providence they might be released from their present confinement, when all at once a flaring, gaudy carriage, well bedaubed with escutcheons and bedizend with plated ornaments, drove into the square, and,

strange to relate, stopped at their door. A stout footman staggering under a long cane and matted tags, and with difficulty waddling in his stiff plushes, applied his hand to the knocker and inflicted a succession of resounding blows, which made the hearts of the inmates jump in their breasts, and caused a reverberation throughout the square.

“What in the name of goodness is that?” said Bab.

“I declare it is a fine carriage!” exclaimed Fanny, taking a peep over Mary’s shoulder. “Here, put away these things—quick!” Upon which she rushed about the room, thrusting Abel’s stockings, which Mary had been darning, under the sofa-cushion; disposing of her own petticoat, which she had been piecing, by throwing it into the adjoining room; taking the kettle from off the fire, and hiding it behind the screen; smothering down her locks, adjusting her gown, taking off her apron;—in short, doing that which is almost part of an English-woman’s religion—making herself tidy.

Mary watched the motions of the carriage

and the footman like one on the look-out to espy the approach of some great personage.

“ They are talking to the footman,” she said. “ There are ladies in the carriage. I think it is the Goold Woodby livery,—the servant is now saying something to Betty,—Betty is making curtsies,—they are giving cards.”

“ Arn’t they coming up ?” cried Fanny in astonishment.

“ No, I think not,” said Mary ;—“ yes, they are,—no, they are not,—yes, they are,—no,—yes : — the servant is just going to open the door,—no, he has shut it again ;—they have left a whole pack of cards,—Betty is making more curtsies,—the footman is getting up behind ;—there they go !—they are gone !” The carriage was heard to rumble away, and Fanny was left all bewildered with agitation ; Aunt Bab became thoughtful, and Mary was both amused and astonished. Abel came in soon after followed by old Betty, who made a display of the cards she had received, on which were inscribed the names of Mrs. Goold

Woodby, attended by a whole catalogue of daughters, and the place of abode, Baker-street.

“Did they know that we were at home?” said Aunt Bab to Betty.

“Yes, sure,” said the old servant. “I told them that you were all here, and that you were purely, saving Miss Fanny, who had been rather queer of late.”

“And did not they ask to come up?”

“Why, they all talked together; some wanted to come, others did not,” said Betty: “until I heard the old lady say, ‘Cards will do,’ and they drove off again.”

“Well, I do declare!” exclaimed Fanny, “there never was anything so unkind.”

Bab held her tongue, for she would not venture to trust herself with an expression of her feelings; but Abel, thinking this a proper moment to make a solemn impression upon his sisters, and to attack that pride of heart which every day told him still hung about them, said, “This is only the first specimen which we have had of the way of the world. We have read of

it, and it has passed into a proverb—but this is it, now we see it. The prosperous shun those who are in adversity—this is as it should be; for the one assimilates as little with the other as a lighted taper with the close air of a cavern: it is only those privileged by the possession of superior minds and of hearts exalted by benignity, to seek the abodes of the poor and the rejected, and make their misery their own. My dear sisters, let us learn by the instance we have had this morning how hollow are those sort of intimacies which go by the name of friendship. The Goold Woodbys have made us a parading visit; and I should be inclined to feel the comparisons to which such a parade naturally lead as strongly as I see you do, had I not already taught myself to expect neglect not only from them, but from all those who were our associates in our better days.”

“Considering that they are the cause of our present misfortune,” said Bab with suppressed anger, “I think they might have asked to see us.”

“ I should like to know,” said Fanny, “ how they venture to give themselves such airs !— odious, purse-proud shopkeepers ! thinking they are doing us an honour by sending us these bits of pasteboard, with their ignoble names inscribed upon them !”

“ My dear Fanny,” said Abel, “ in God’s name let us not lose all the advantages which the lesson now dispensed to us by adversity ought to afford ! If properly received, it cannot fail producing the most beneficial results— results by which we shall be purged from that most hateful vice, pride ; and from which we may hope to reap the benefit of that most inestimable virtue, humility. It is a great privilege to be so visited—it may be our salvation : when this world and all its fascinations shall have passed away, and when we shall be where every one born of woman must sooner or later be — on the verge of the grave and of eternity, then we shall bless the hand that chastened us, and brought us, ere it was too late, to a proper sense of the utter nothingness of this life !”

These observations had their due effect, and tended very much to remove the angry feelings which Mrs. Woodby's ostentatious visit had excited. They could not, however, abstain from discussing the matter at full length as soon as Edward Manby appeared; and after he had received a full and detailed account of the whole transaction, he told them what they did not know,—that it had become very much the fashion to make a card perform as proxy the whole business of a visit, and that the visiter's name upon a piece of paper was considered to stand in lieu of ‘How do you do?’ ‘Very well;’ ‘It's very fine weather;’—‘I'm your humble servant;’—which is generally the sum total of one of those unmeaning visitations, a morning call.

This piece of information tended still more than Abel's homily to pacify them; and they had scarcely done forgiving the supposed unkindness, when another loud rap at the door was heard, followed up by the appearance of Mr. Thomas Goold Woodby, junior, in person, to pay his respects. This visit altoge-

ther calmed the irritation, because he confirmed what Edward had asserted, by saying that his mother and sisters had scarcely yet had an opportunity to announce their arrival in town, and that they had that very morning sallied out for the first time to leave their cards."

"They might as well have come up," said Bab, "to see their old friends, although we have nothing to give them now excepting a hearty welcome."

"Indeed," said Fanny, adopting the same tone, "it would have been but kind to take a look at us, although we haven't as good a luncheon to offer as we had at Ivycote."

Tom threw as much softness as he could into his bull-dog countenance, glancing all the time at the unconscious Mary, and said, "London being so different from the country, nobody could expect to see each other except by snatches at uncertain times; but," he added with a certain pomp and emphasis, "in order to secure a meeting, I am come to invite you to dinner, which, after all, is the surest way in London to meet."

This piece of attention entirely dispelled any remains of ill-feeling; and Bab and Fanny looked at each other uncertain what to answer. Many considerations would make them pause ere they could consent to so unexpected a proposal, for much was to be considered—expense—dress—and mode of conveyance. The general desire was to go, for Barbara wished once more to meet old Woodby, to give him a piece of her mind upon Mexican bonds; Fanny was always for an outing; and Abel, whose whole heart and soul were engrossed in providing for his family, thought he might find an opening for proposing himself as a teacher of the flute, which was now, as he thought, their almost last resource. Mary was the only one who gave a dissentient voice, for she shunned every opportunity of being in company with Tom Woodby.

As soon as this young gentleman had taken his leave, which he did saying that his mother would send the proper card of invitation when the day was fixed, the family council opened their deliberations. They talked

long and took enlarged views of the case. Abel thought the proper way of looking at the question was to balance the certain expense which they must incur with the uncertain advantages; for his part, he was of opinion, in their needy situation, that friends were absolutely necessary to them—friends who would further any scheme they might have of gaining a livelihood: he wished himself to give lessons on the flute, which he felt fully competent to do; and therefore by accepting the proposed invitation he expected to find a good opportunity of opening his plan to such friends as he might meet. Barbara applauded his scheme, and moreover added, that she, perhaps, might have an opportunity of hinting to old Woodby, that as he had been such a gainer by the Mexican bond transaction, he ought in justice to help them. Abel entreated her not to buoy herself up with such a hope, and not to expect generosity from one who could have so taken advantage of ignorance: Providence and their own exertions, he asserted, must now be their main dependance; and he made no

doubt that however distressed they might become, yet still if they exerted their best energies, and kept their conscience clear, they would not fail to enjoy peace of mind, in itself a greater blessing than all that the Woodby wealth could bestow. Fanny remarked, were it only for health's sake, they ought to seek a little dissipation, and that it was unfair to let a young person like Mary sit moping all day long in the house unknown and unseen. Mary did not allow herself to give an opinion, excepting to assure Aunt Fanny that as far as she was personally concerned, she was perfectly contented and happy never to stir from home.

When the card came, it was paraded with great state into the drawing-room by the astounded Betty, who having received it from a brilliant lackey, eyed it as a mandate from royalty itself. The consequence was the acceptance of the invitation, and Aunt Fanny was empowered to send a proper answer. Thence ensued an animated discussion upon dress. As a week would elapse ere the event took place, sufficient time was left for prepa-

ration. Fanny's ingenuity was required to compose new dresses out of old ones ; and she exercised it so effectually, that unless to those who had witnessed the *début* of the grey gown and the cherry-coloured silk at Belvedere Hall, no one could imagine that they had already seen a summer in the country.

The greatest difficulty to be overcome was the acquisition of a pair of new pantaloons for Uncle Abel. By no contrivance could drab be made to look black at night ; and as it has become part of a man's system of ethics to dine out in black pantaloons, so it became imperative upon Abel either to procure such a commodity, or not to go. Chancing to walk through a by-lane thinking over this subject, his eyes fell upon the notices in the shop-window of an obscure tailor, and there he found that the very thing he wanted was pressingly offered for twelve shillings. This was so inviting, that he made up his mind immediately to accede to it, walked into the shop, was well received by a small oblique-looking man, and straightway was measured.

He returned to his sisters triumphant, and told them how well he had been aided by fortune, and that all difficulties were now overcome.

In the course of two days arrived the tailor, the bill, and the pantaloons. Abel hurried to try them on ; but what was his dismay when, having succeeded in introducing his legs, he stuck somewhere in the same part as Gulliver did when he was thrust into the marrow-bone at Brobdignag ! At length, at the risk of splitting, he managed to get entirely in ; but having done so, he could not move—a step would have ripped open every seam, and he expostulated to the tailor in these words :—

“ This will never do — these things are a great deal too tight.”

“ Are they ?” said the tailor.

“ Yes ; don’t you see ?” said Abel.

“ They *are* a little tight,” said the tailor ;
“ but they ’ll soon stretch.

“ I can scarcely walk in them,” said Abel.

“ I think they will do very well,” said the tailor.

“No, they won’t do at all,” said Abel; “I can’t straddle in them.”

“Straddle!” said the tailor; “no, I didn’t suppose you could!—Who ever thought of straddling for twelve shillings?”

This was a view of the question which Abel had never taken, and to which he knew not what to answer; but it gave him an opportunity of making this reflection,—that things which are extravagantly cheap, are on the whole dearer than things extravagantly the contrary.

CHAPTER XI.

*“ C'est l'occasion qui fait le larron.” Love, like murder,
will out.*

SINCE the first commencement of the rivalry for Mary's favour, Tom Woodby and Edward Manby had never been friends. Tom, vain of his person and proud of his expectations, was also envious and implacable. He could never conceive that one so poor, so lowly, and of such little note as Edward could be preferred before him, and he lost no opportunity of exhibiting the bitterness of his dislike and the meanness of his spites. He was the cause of his not being invited to the dinner; a slight which Edward felt as young men are apt to feel on such occasions, particularly when their friends are few and their fortunes small.

Everything was in progress in Golden-square in preparation for the dinner, and the hour was fast approaching.

On the day before this event was to take place, Edward arrived greatly agitated in Golden-square. Abel was not at home: he met Aunt Bab and Fanny on the stairs just going out to purchase some necessary bit of dress: they stopped him, and observing his hasty and perturbed look, inquired what was the matter? "I am obliged to go to Liverpool immediately," said Edward. They requested him to wait for them in the drawing-room, saying that they would soon return. When he entered that room, he found Mary by herself. He had never yet had an opportunity of seeing her alone, and in truth he had always dreaded it—so full of undefined apprehension and secret misgiving is the real passion of love. He had been a thousand times on the point of disclosing to her by writing what she must long have known, the ardent sentiments of his heart; yet he always checked himself by those cogent reflections which we have before described: but

now his heart was too full, and the opportunity too inviting to allow the control of the dictates of prudence. She evidently discovered, by his manner and countenance, that something unusual had happened; and as she saw him approach, her heart beat violently, whilst her face was covered with blushes. He began by informing her of the necessity of his speedy departure; that he had that morning received a letter from his uncle, in which he was upbraided for his long absence; and informed that his affairs required his immediate return; and in short, that various other reasons urged were too powerful for him to resist. He said that he was too much indebted to his uncle for his constant kind behaviour not immediately to attend to his wishes, and therefore he was determined to obey his call.

Edward perceived that at the first announcement of this piece of intelligence to Mary, she was visibly affected: its sudden disclosure had taken her unawares, and she could not conceal how much she felt the loss she was about to sustain. This tacit acknowledgment of the

interest she took in his fate entirely overthrew the little power he still retained over himself; and ere a minute had elapsed, he had made a full and passionate avowal of his love, and opened to her, in simple, sincere, and un-studied language, every thought and feeling of his heart, entreating her by all that was pure and tender to allow him to live in hope that he might one day call her his own.

How could Mary conceal from him what every look and action had so long disclosed? She fully avowed her sentiments; and having done this, she said, "But, Edward, when I have told you thus much, I feel that there I must stop!"—Her eyes filled with tears, and her bosom swelled with strong emotion; and then exerting evident violence over herself, she continued: "I cannot and will not bind myself to any other being in this world so long as I see my uncle and aunts in the state of want to which they are soon too likely to be reduced! Putting the promise I have made to my father never to marry without his consent out of the question, everything tells

me that I am theirs as long as this state of trial to which they are exposed lasts. God's will be done !—He alone knows what is for our good : but my duty is plain—never will I give this hand to any one unless by so doing I can prevent the misery of these my dear relations. You, Edward—kind, feeling, generous as you are, I am sure will understand me. You will even second my resolution ! Let us here swear that no selfish feeling of ours shall ever interfere to destroy this sacred intention !”

Edward was affected to tears by the touching simplicity of heart and exalted virtue which shone forth in every look, word, and expression of the gentle being before him. He would have exacted some more definite promise from her, but that he feared to hurt those generous feelings of devotion to her relations which actuated her ; and he felt that for the present he must remain satisfied with the simple assurance of her love. This certainty, secured to him by the warrant of her own lips, infused an instantaneous feeling of satisfaction throughout his being, and comforted him in the doleful

separation which was about to ensue. They dwelt long upon the many and various possibilities which constitute that large circumference of hope so apt to surround the hearts of the wretched—they contemplated the probability of affairs taking a favourable turn in Mexico, by which her uncle and aunts would be restored to their independence—they discussed the hope of soon seeing Mary's father, upon which so much of their welfare depended ; and then Edward, with all the language and confidence of youth, cheered up her drooping spirits by adverting to his own prospects, which, owing to the kindness of his uncle, whom he was now going to propitiate, he asserted were likely to be soon very prosperous.

By the time they had poured out the whole effusion of their hearts, and vowed those thousand protestations of eternal love which are always better imagined by the reader than expressed by the writer, the return of Aunt Barbara and Fanny was announced ; and though no time is ever long enough for lovers, yet on this occasion its lapse became a matter of conse-

quence, since at a fixed hour Edward was obliged to take his departure. Abel returned opportunely to see him before he went; and having extorted a promise from him to write often, he left the house,—we will not venture to say for what length of time.

Edward's departure produced a great blank in the family—for he was not only an agreeable companion, but also its friend and adviser. It would be difficult to say who loved him the most: Barbara could do nothing without his advice; Fanny's affection for him was of so vascilating a nature, that it usually vibrated between friendship and love; whilst Abel's esteem for his high qualities was of the most exalted kind, for he entirely came up to his ideas of what a man ought to be. With such feelings, perhaps it will not be thought extraordinary that neither the uncle nor the aunts had remarked, nor had it ever entered their heads to suppose, that there existed between him and Mary any sentiment beyond that of common friendship. Time had passed on in such dull uniformity, that nothing ever

occurred to excite the passion they mutually felt into anything beyond the casual and daily acts of attention and intimacy. So little were they aware of the real truth, that it was their habit frequently to speculate upon the person to whom they would accord their darling niece. They scarcely knew any young men besides Tom Woodby and Edward; and as they never contemplated any attentions from the one, so they generally decided that the other would be a very desirable match. His behaviour since his family had come to town had very much reconciled them to him: Barbara thought it very civil on his part to pay them a visit purposely to ask them to dinner; Fanny asserted that he was a very genteel young man; and Abel, who had long foreseen all the miseries of poverty, would often speculate as to the eligibility of marrying his niece to so wealthy a man, in order to screen her from the wretchedness in prospect. They therefore constantly urged Mary to receive him with more alacrity than she was accustomed to show when he appeared.

The very morning of Edward's departure, when poor Mary's bosom heaved with sorrow, and she appeared visibly dejected, the very subject she most avoided was brought under discussion. "We must endeavour to compensate for Edward's absence by making a great deal more of Tom Woodby than we have done," said Aunt Bab. "It stands to reason that if he's discouraged he won't come near us. My dear Mary," (addressing her,) "I wish you would manage to make yourself agreeable to him!—you do always so keep him at a distance, that it is quite shocking to see you!"

"I'm quite certain," said Fanny, "if Mary would only look at him straight, take her head from off her work when he talks to her, and give him good long answers, not short 'Noes,' without a single 'Yes' to bless himself with, he would be as easy and comfortable with us as an old shoe."

Abel would have said something also, but that he remarked the subject was disagreeable to her. He approached her, and taking her hand, said, "I am afraid, my dear, that

you are not very well: let us hope that a little dissipation will do you good. You have been oppressed by the dull life we lead: to-morrow you will go out and see some new faces—I fear you will sadly tire of ours.”

Mary’s heart was full, and this act of kindness made it overflow. She burst into tears, and kissing her uncle with affection, left the room.

“ I am afraid that poor dear,” said Fanny, “ is sadly moped: she has not had a bit of gaiety, excepting the hand-organs and hurdy-gurdies in the square, since we have been here. She must positively go out—I wish the Goold Woodbys were giving a ball instead of a dinner to-morrow.”

“ It stands to reason,” said Aunt Bab, “ that young things like her must have gaiety, or else they will die. I recollect very well when I was young, I nearly killed myself by teaching the charity children in our village to sing the hundredth Psalm—it was so dull and they were so obstinate: but a good game at blindman’s buff put it all to rights—and so will the Woodbys’ dinner put Mary to rights.”

“ You do not think that Tom Woodby can have proposed to her yet?” said Fanny with a mysterious air. “ You know few young girls can be asked the question without wincing—and I think all that crying and seriousness looks very suspicious. I recollect very well, when that Captain Rawbone had the impertinence to propose for me, with his red whiskers and freckled skin, I was so put out for a day or two that I could not eat, and got as thin as my stays through fretting.”

“ I think what you now suggest to be impossible,” said Bab ; “ because Mary tells us everything the very moment it happens. She’s not a girl to keep anything to herself, all excepting her fear for her dear father’s safety ; I am afraid that does weigh upon her very heavily : poor thing ! how she does dote upon him !”

“ God’s will be done !” said Abel with a deep sigh and a most reverential tone of voice. “ If we do not hear from him soon, I shall begin to be anxious.”

The conversation which had so unseasonably

taken place concerning Tom Woodby, had in truth been the cause of Mary's retreat to her room. Coming almost immediately upon the back of her explanation with Edward, it had shocked her, because she felt, now that he was gone, how much she would be exposed to the attentions and observation of his rival. She quite loathed his sight,—and with good reason, for the motives which impelled him were in every way most wicked and profligate.

This young gentleman's ambition was to be thought a man of fashion and pleasure. He was encouraged by his foolish mother and sisters in this pursuit ; but ignorant as he was of the many requisites which make up that character, his vulgar mind could only imagine the depravity and the vice, without including any of the refinement so essential to its complete formation. He provided himself with all the proper exteriors, and then thought that he might compete with the best in the land. His little person was dressed out with scrupulous precision ; he kept aloof from the common herd, and disdaining to make use of his legs, was carried

about at the tail of a tall horse, escorted by a wretched boy in the guise of a groom. He did his best to get into good clubs, but not gaining admittance there, he became a swaggering member of the worst.

When the ruin of the Allnutts was announced, his wicked heart beat with joy; for nothing more was wanting to complete his equipment than to become the tyrant over some weak and wretched outcast—nay, his malignant desires dared soar to the possession of the pure and gentle Mary, particularly as in compassing her ruin, he intended to exhibit his superiority as well as his contempt for his more favoured rival Edward. It was he who insisted with his parents that they should visit the family, and invite them to dinner. This had been a subject of fierce contention at home; but Tom's determined resolution carried the day—he had laid a plan in his own head for pursuing his iniquitous scheme; and as he was not deficient in skill and cunning, he sagaciously determined to secure the approbation of the old folks on his side, ere

he undertook his greater exploit. The truth is, that Mrs. Goold Woodby, impelled by Lady Thomson, had determined not to visit the Allnutts in London; for her object in life was to raise herself by endeavouring to associate with the rich and great; and what had she to gain, beyond the vulgar enjoyment of doing a kind act, by continuing her intimacy with them? She arrived from the country full of the most extensive schemes of 'cutting a figure,' and brought Lady Thomson with her as her dry-nurse. Lady Thomson planned her luxuries, and chose the fashion of her liveries, introduced her to the fashionable tradesmen, and threw her into the arms of extravagant milliners. She moreover supplied her with visiting lists, and never lost an opportunity of making obligations a marketable commodity, turning the civilities conferred upon her friend to her own benefit. She was ingenuity personified in executing any act of baseness, in order to secure the notice of the great; and was equally full of talent in avoiding those whom it was inconvenient to know. But her scheme of 'cutting' the

Allnutts became abortive, owing to the too powerful influence of the arrogant and petulant Tom, who, in spite of the stinginess and surliness of his father, and the ambitious views of his mother, had acquired a sway in the family which nothing could withstand. Lady Thomson herself was obliged to lower her diminished head, and bully Tom, as he was occasionally called, had it all his own way.

CHAPTER XII.

Town vanities and ridiculous pretensions.

AMONG a knot of men who were standing together idling away their morning at the window of one of the clubs, stood Mr. Simpleton Sharp, the dull-witted young gentleman we have before noticed, and his friend Lord Demone.

“By the by, Demone,” said he, “do you dine at those rich citizen friends of yours, the Woodby Goolds, or Silver Woodbys, or some such name, to-day? they have sent me an invite to meet the widow Thomson, or Thomas, or some name of that sort—I hope you go?”

“How can you mistake names in that manner?” said Demone: “the people’s names are

Goold Woodby. Everybody would be as much surprised were I to call them Woodby Goold, as if I were to call you *Sharp* Simpleton !”

This raised such a laugh at the expense of the affected coxcomb, that he retired as fast as he could, not without reflecting how he might make use of the joke again to his own advantage. These two worthies formed part of the society that were to assemble at Mr. Goold Woodby’s dinner, on the same day that our friends from Golden-square were invited ; and we must take up our history from the moment that a hackney-coach, the most sonoric of its kind, resounding with clashing iron steps, and creaking with uneasy springs, stopped at the door of the well-known three-windowed mansion in Baker-street, and announced its arrival by an abortive knock from the unpractised hand of the drab-coated driver. As soon as the door was opened, appeared a host of liveried louts within, who seemed to be running one against another, unpractised as they were in their vocation ; and soon was heard the jingling crash

of the iron steps let down from the vehicle in order to promote the delivery that was to ensue. First issued Abel, leading out Aunt Bab, in all the pomp and circumstance of her grey gown, followed by Fanny glistening in her cherry colour, and succeeded by Mary; alas! how different in air and in buoyancy of spirits from that day when she first appeared at Belvedere. Straw was not wanting to track their line of march; and they would have been so tracked into the very drawing-room, had not they discovered among the servants honest Brown, their old country servant, who in almost worshipping the ground they trod upon, also cleared away the straws that adhered to their skirts.

The facetious Demone, whose quickness in the detection of ridicule always supplied him with an appropriate nick-name, ere he finished his late visit at Belvedere Hall, had grafted the name of *Barbarossa* upon Aunt Bab, on account of certain sprigs of reddish hair that grew about her lips and chin. Aunt Fanny, too, he illustrated as *la Fanée*; whilst Abel, in

allusion to his teeth, he invariably called *Curius Dentatus*. These different designations, ever since his lordship's visit (particularly since the Mexican defalcation), were become current in the Goold Woodby family; and the individuals in question were scarcely known by any other names, excepting that Mrs. Goold Woodby would usually exert her talent in slip-slop, by calling the last "*Curious 'tatoes*."

It appears that the intention of Mrs. Woodby had only been to invite Abel and Mary to dinner. A large portion of the company had already arrived, when the Miss Allnutts and Mr. Allnutt were announced. Mrs. Woodby, her daughters, and Lady Thomson, all looked thunderstruck, particularly as one after the other in goodly procession filtered through the door into the room—first Aunt Bab escorted by Abel, then Aunt Fanny, and last of all, Mary. All who know what giving a dinner in London means, and are conversant in the ceremony of counting noses, may perhaps imagine what Mrs. Goold Woodby felt when she saw two more persons arrive

than were expected. The circumstance almost took away her breath : she met the whole party in so perturbed a state of mind, that her reception of them was even more chilling than that she might have given to a poor cousin approaching her to claim relationship. Abel, being humble, did not see why he should be received with cordiality, and the circumstance by him was unheeded ; but Aunts Bab and Fanny could scarcely recover their astonishment, and had it been in their nature to be angry they would have been greatly so.

Whisperings ensued—Lady Thomson was appealed to—she shook her head ; the girls looked hot and put out ; Mr. Woodby got up what cordiality he could, but it was quite deficient in the old vibration of the elbow ; and in short, the preliminary to this expected feast portended from the first nothing but a concoction of crude humours.

“ I only asked ‘ *Curious ’tatoes* ’ and his niece to come,” said Mrs. Woodby to Lady Thomson ; “ what could make old Barbarossa and Fanny come too—what shall we do ? ”

“You can’t help yourself now,” said Lady Thomson; “in justice to yourself you can’t turn them away: ’tis Tom who has done this. You must contrive to make two more places at the table;” upon which, ringing the bell for the servant, more whisperings ensued, and the agitation for the moment subsided.

After the usual progress, arranged according to the strictest adherence to rank, had taken place down the staircase towards the dining-room, and when the august assembly had after much difficulty seated themselves, it was found that the addition of the two supernumeraries had rendered the whole operation in prospect about as irksome as sitting four in a chariot, or playing the fiddle in a sentry-box. In point of comfort it was a dinner very much like the one described by Boileau:

Où chacun, malgré soi, l’un sur l’autre porté,
Faisoit un tour à gauche, et mangeoit de côté.

To the vulgar-minded, display is pleasure, ceremony is good breeding, and expense is excellence. Mrs. Goold Woodby and her husband were eminent instances of this: although

they were in essentials the most niggardly and avaricious of mortals, yet on occasions of display they forgot their avarice in order to indulge their vanity. The room was lighted to almost oven heat, and when to that were added the steam and fumes of the dinner, both acting violently upon the spiracles of the skin belonging to the attendants, it may, perhaps, be imagined how great was the oppression produced by the exercise of eating in such an atmosphere. In such heat and under such circumstances little was left for the free action of the intellect.

Lady Thomson, however, who had made up her mind to shine on this occasion, had got up a scrap of literary talk, and after several unavailing efforts, having at length given her opinion upon some of the productions of the day, undertook to defend the book of a friend of hers, a lady author, by asserting ‘that she had written it for the purposes of charity.’

“She ought to recollect,” said her opposite neighbour, Lord Demone, “that ‘charity begins at home ;’” an answer which excited Lady

Thomson's wrath in proportion as it was applauded by Simpleton Sharp.

Mr. Woodby having long since exhausted the subject of his lodges, his shields, and his family mottos, had now set up a new idol in his mind, and that was the size and excellence of a kitchen he had constructed in his house in Baker-street. This subject was now become the terror of his friends, and formed his stock story. We have already before hinted that he was celebrated for want of hospitality, excepting on such occasions as the present (if such may be called hospitality), and therefore, the discussion of this great kitchen only made him appear the more ridiculous in relating its history. He had undertaken to describe it in its most minute circumstances to Aunt Fanny, who lent an attentive ear, and seemed as much absorbed in the various intricacies of the steam apparatus, patent spit, and ingeniously devised oven, as the narrator could wish, whilst Demone secretly gave his attention and enjoyed the whole scene with malicious amusement. At length Woodby exclaimed, "Why, ma'am, in

short, my kitchen is so large that I could roast an ox in it."

Fanny, with the greatest simplicity of mind, gently said, "And do you?"—a question which so intensely tickled the wit's fancy that he could not refrain from bursting into such laughter that it immediately excited Simpleton Sharp's sympathies; who thinking it quite sacrilegious when his Joe Miller had taken to laugh himself that he should not join, laughed too with all his best energies.

Aunt Bab and Abel, perceiving that laughter had been excited by something that Fanny had said, were involuntarily filled with dismay, being quite certain that in proportion as she promoted merriment in others she produced confusion to them. Old Woodby's story was stopped by this explosion, and as in a farm-yard one oftentimes hears a distant donkey take up the expiring bray of one near at hand, so, as soon as the husband had ceased to speak, the wife immediately broke out into some of her usual ill-timed remarks. She cried out from the further end of the long table to her husband,

“ Now, Mr. Woodby, do you hear that? Here’s Mr. Allnutt says that Edward Manby is gone back to Liverpool, and without ever coming to see us or wishing us good b’ye—now is not that ungrateful of him?”

“ He was obliged to go,” said Abel, “ at a moment’s notice ; his uncle wrote to him in a great hurry.”

“ There ’s no excuse for him—now is there, Lord Demone?” addressing herself to him, seeing that no one else would listen to her.

“ There is only one excuse, which is necessity,” said Lord Demone.

“ One day could make no difference. Now need he go so soon, I only ask you that,—need he go?”

“ Why he would *go needy* if he did not,” said the incorrigible joker.

“ That ’s what he will do at all events,” said the lady, not in the least perceiving the point of the answer which she had received ; “ Edward Manby will never get on in the world—now mark my words—he thinks a great deal too much about right and wrong.”

“ He can never go wrong as long as he acts rightly,” said Abel with spirit.

“ He may go right, and welcome, as long as he chooses,” said Mrs. Goold Woodby ; “ and to do right is all very well in its way ; but really I don’t see why he should give himself airs of consequence, and come Sir Charles *Grandson* over us ; for after all, Mr. Goold Woodby has treated him more like his own son than anything else.”

Tom Woodby, who felt that it was owing to his conduct that Edward had been driven from the house, and fearing that something unpleasant to himself might be elicited by this untimely discussion, turned the conversation by making some common-place remark upon the Opera, giving himself the airs of a patron of dancers and singers, and all this, as he fondly hoped, to make an impression upon his neighbour, the (to him) impassive Mary.

The eyes of all at table had been turned upon her rare beauty, a sight truly refreshing amidst the ostentatious display and oppressive finery which filled the room. The women were

envious of her charms, the men were lost in admiration. Tom, with that sort of presumption which the eminently low are so apt to possess, comported himself in a manner which, he flattered himself, would make every one suppose that he stood first in her good graces. He was officiously attentive to her wants; he would occasionally bend himself towards her, speak in a confidential whisper, then turn about to see if he was observed; and when he perceived how much she was annoyed, would instantly take upon himself the airs of being the director and patron of the whole table, drinking wine with one, rallying a second, and recommending good things to a third. To Aunt Bab he was peculiarly attentive, for he was sagacious enough to discern that she was the ascendant in that family horizon, and that he must secure her influence before he could compass any end he might have in view relating to her niece.

As for Abel, he saw in Tom one who might be the means of promoting his views of setting up as a teacher of the flute; and during

the course of the entertainment his principal thoughts were turned upon that one object; he therefore received the bad young man's advances with good-will. He looked into the face of every man at table, with the hope that in the conformation of his lips he might discover one who was fond of blowing into a small hole. He conceived that in Lord Demone he had discovered that man, for by the cast of his face he deemed him to be musical, and as his chest was broad, he made no doubt that there was nothing in his lungs to impede the scheme he had of teaching him the flute. With the same eye he viewed Simpleton Sharp and Tom Woodby — they were both tolerable subjects. Old Mr. Woodby evidently would not do, his lips were certainly nonconductors of sweet sounds; but he felt sure that, if he could start with the three aforementioned, with that capital alone, he flattered himself he might keep his sisters from starving. There were two or three more upon whom he speculated, but not being acquainted with them, he allowed himself to be satisfied with those he knew. Accord-

ingly, when dinner was over, calling Tom on one side, and prefacing what he had to say with a short account of the necessitous situation to which they were reduced, he unfolded his scheme and begged his assistance.

Tom, who at one glance saw how entirely he would have the free ingress to the house by furthering Abel's wishes, entered into the scheme with the greatest apparent zeal, and assured him that he would not only become a scholar himself, but that he would induce Lord Demone and Simpleton Sharp to follow his example, and with them, as a beginning, he made no doubt that ere long he would have as many pupils as he could wish. Abel's eyes filled with tears of gratitude, and he thanked him with unsuspecting sincerity.

Feeling by this arrangement he would be placed beyond the reach of downright want, his spirits became elated, and his sisters afterwards said that they had never seen Abel in such good-humour since that specimen of happiness he evinced in the first part of the fête at Ivycote.

But it was different with them. They had not overcome the shock of Mrs. Woodby's cold reception, and they longed for the moment of departure. They sat by themselves after dinner unheeded and neglected. The admiration excited by Mary had produced no favourable feelings towards her in the hearts of the young ladies, and they scarcely noticed her by even the common forms of civility. Indeed the whole thing, from the beginning to the end, had been one uniform action of ponderous dulness to them ; and wherever people meet together, as is frequently the case, not for the purposes of exchanging ideas, but solely to exhibit dress and persons, to eat, and drink, and to go away, such must ever be the result.

We will not continue our narrative of this dinner to its very termination, for fear of inspiring some of that dulness in our readers which was its characteristic ; but we can assure them that it was complete in all its parts. The ladies sat, yawned, perambulated, and talked of long and short sleeves, till they were

relieved by the gentlemen and coffee. Several refreshers—among whom were Captain Swaggle and Mr. Dolittle—were afterwards announced, whence ensued flirtations—then a sensation was produced by the arrival of the lion of the evening, Mrs. Goold Woodby's first cousin, the great Mr. Flam, from Chingiput, famous for having wrestled with a royal tiger in the Sunderbunds — afterwards a song took place by Miss Anne, succeeded by variations on the harp by Miss Ellen, which led to a general departure. So ended a day expected to have been full of enjoyment, but which terminated in disgust, having however fulfilled one of its principal expectations, namely—to set up Abel as a teacher of the German flute.

CHAPTER XIII.

*It is like trusting to the wind, depending upon teaching the
flute for daily bread.*

LORD DEMONE was one of Mary's most ardent admirers. So artless in manner, so engaging in her whole deportment, and so eminently beautiful, her appearance in the company and in the scene to which we have referred in the last chapter, was so unlike those who met on that occasion in the full exercise of all their grosser appetites, and mental corruptions, that it was impossible not to be greatly struck by the comparison. He viewed her through the medium of those appetites. When he reflected upon himself and his own person, he felt that he never could succeed in attracting her notice, and often said to himself, "I suppose

she looks upon me as a disgusting old man, old enough to be her father." Still he longed to render himself acceptable to her ; and when Tom Woodby, after making the proper explanations concerning the needy state of the family, couched in sentiments current among libertines, proposed to him to become Abel's scholar, the profligate man soon acceded to the proposal, hoping that by exerting his lungs in favour of the uncle he might stand a chance of gaining the heart of his niece. When Tom applied to Simpleton Sharp for the same purpose, he at first objected upon the score of the weakness of his chest, besides having no positive ear for music ; but when he was told that Lord Demone had agreed to the proposal, he no longer made any difficulty. Thus Abel was supplied with three pupils ; and we beg the reader to introduce himself in imagination into a small front parlour looking into Golden-square, where Abel, having received the notification that his three scholars would wait upon him during the course of the morning, was making the proper preparations for their re-

ception. Happiness beamed in his heart, and expressions of gratitude would ever and anon burst from his lips for what he looked upon as a providential interposition; that want which was staring him in the face he hoped to stave off; those creditors who would inevitably come for their due, he now hoped to meet with a ready hand; and he blessed God that the talent which he possessed, so despised and scouted as it had been by his sisters, should now be the means of procuring for them a livelihood. He spread a table in the middle of the room, covered it with a bit of green baize, and there made a display of his flute and music. Against several large folios he raised his music-book; and then, walking round and round, he gazed upon what he had done with as much self-complacency as if he had raised an altar to the God of Harmony. His sisters and Mary came down to help him, dusting every corner, cleaning every chair and table, and preparing for the reception of his scholars with unfeigned interest, their hearts at the same time overflowing with the kindest

feelings towards him, for that devotedness to them which characterised his every thought and action.

Were we asked to draw the strongest contrast we could imagine between man and man, we should name Abel Allnutt and Lord Demone. Behold the simple, unsuspecting, and sincere Abel, endeavouring to make the designing, insidious, and sensual Demone screw up his lips into such a focus that they might blow into the small aperture of a flute; labouring to adjust his fingers; entreating of him to infuse his breath into the hole instead of its side; every now and then slapping his hands with ecstasy as soon as his lordship produced some hideous sound, which he affirmed made an excellent beginning. The crafty pupil laughed in his sleeve at the zeal of the master, and at the probation to which he had subjected himself. He soon got tired of the efforts he was called upon to make, and when he announced that the lesson was over for that day, Abel felt hurt that so little had been required of him, and that his pupil had

made such small progress. Tom Woodby and Simpleton Sharp came in succession, and the time was passed more in settling preliminaries for future proceedings than in any actual lesson, much to the delight of Abel, who, enthusiastic as he was about music, contemplated the hope of establishing a sort of morning academy, in which his pupils eagerly joined, particularly when he fully acquiesced in their proposal of joining Mary, who was a good musician, to their concert. Demone loudly proclaimed that if Miss Mary came, he intended to play *apart*, an innuendo which no one understood excepting the libertine Tom, who now for the first time perceived that he might have to combat another rival in his noble friend.

The result of this morning's labour was that the whole party adjourned to visit the ladies up-stairs, who received them with appropriate smiles and welcome. Aunt Barbara, 'tis true, only saw in them so many representatives of the few shillings that were to be the remuneration of each lesson; but Fanny took a more

sentimental view of the case, and began to think that swains might abound as well in Golden-square as among the fields and grassy banks of the country. She renewed her former acquaintance with Lord Demone, who did not allow his good breeding to forsake him as he met her advances, although he groaned under the apprehension that he might be obliged again to undergo the history of brother John, or be led out on the leads to admire the beauties of a kitchen chimney.

Mary made an effort in furtherance of the wishes of her aunts and uncle to render herself agreeable to their guests, and now turned a less reluctant ear to the insipid inanities of Tom Woodby's remarks and flattery, hoping thereby to prove herself willing to sacrifice her own feelings to those of her relations. The visit, however, had scarcely commenced ere the postman's knock was heard at the door, and presently a letter was delivered to her uncle. Looking at its address, he exclaimed, "From Edward Manby, I declare!"

and then opened it with great demonstrations of delight.

Mary visibly changed colour at this announcement, a circumstance which immediately caught the eye of Tom, and which did not escape the observation of Demone.

“What did you say?” said Aunt Bab to her brother, with much animation.

“Here is news from John,” answered Abel, intent upon reading the letter with the greatest earnestness.

“News from papa!” exclaimed Mary, jumping up from her seat and running to her uncle in a transport of delight, her cheek flushed, and her eyes beaming with joy. “What does he say? Is he well?—Is he coming to us?—do tell me!” she exclaimed in one breath; whilst Abel, still reading, answered, “He’s very well,—he’s not coming—I’ll tell you all in a minute.”

The arrival of this letter made the parties interested in it so forgetful of the presence of their visitors, that Lord Demone thought it right to take his leave, and, dragging the others

with him, left the family to the free expansion of their feelings.

“ Read it to us,” said Barbara.

“ Read,” said Fanny.

Abel being seated, Mary posted herself close to him in order to feast her eyes upon the letter for more reasons than one, and he read as follows :—

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,

“ I write in great haste to inform you that I have seen the master of a merchantman, an intelligent man, who only arrived yesterday from Vera Cruz, and who informs me that he had heard of your brother John, although he had not seen him, and that he was in good health and spirits, notwithstanding the failure of the expedition upon which he was sent, owing to the causes truly described by your banker. He reports he was well known to the inhabitants of that city, who never before had seen one so zealous, active, and enthusiastic, and so ready to devote himself to the interests of the republic. The fortress of San Juan de Ulloa,

still in the hands of the Spaniards, he proposed to take by erecting one of Perkins' steam-guns against it, and talked of battering down the walls in an hour. The barren Island of Sacrificios, famous for being the burial-place of the ancient Indians, he promised to render eminently fertile, by ploughing it and using the old bones as manure, which he assured the people would make vegetation spring up where it had never before appeared. He objected to allowing the *sopilotes* (the carrion vultures) to retain the situation of scavengers to the city; asserting that they ought to be shot by act of congress, and good wholesome sewers constructed instead.

“ His first impression upon seeing the naked Indians was to encourage manufactures, in order to clothe them comfortably; and when he observed the sickly little children crawling about the streets, he immediately planned an infant school for them. In short, it seems that Vera Cruz was set quite alive by his presence. He made the authorities, civil and military, stare by the activity of his disposition, and in-

deed they were right glad when he left their city for Jalapa, at which place I hear he became more and more enthusiastic. Before he reached Mexico, he twice escaped being robbed and murdered, and in consequence determined to urge the government to establish a new police, precisely upon the plan of our own ; and when he came in sight of the Lake of Tescuco, its ducks, and flat-bottomed boats, he became quite wild with the desire of turning such natural advantages to the greatest possible national benefit. My informant did not tell me what his ulterior plans were ; but it does not appear that he is likely to quit Mexico for some time to come. I will keep you well informed whenever I hear more ; in the meanwhile let me congratulate you all, (Miss Mary in particular,) upon knowing him to be in good health.

“ I am sorry that I can't say much in favour of my own prospects. The story is a long one, and would take up more time than I can at present afford. It shall be for your private ear when please God we meet again : in the mean

while, pray recollect that I am wholly and entirely yours, devoted to your service, and that I only live in the hope of proving the truth and sincerity of my friendship.

“ Ever your affectionate

“ EDWARD MANBY.

“ P.S. The master of the ship says that things in Mexico are in a very unsettled state, and that the merchants are all very desponding. Alas ! alas !”

This letter put flutes and flute-players entirely out of their heads for the moment, and they discussed its contents from morning till night, making every sort of conjecture upon what might be John's ultimate fate. Mary sat down in deep thought, every now and then anxious to join her father, and then subduing that feeling by the reflection that she would be better employed in being of use to her uncle and aunts. She deeply sighed as she fixed her thoughts upon Edward, and became impatient to know what he meant, when he alluded to the untoward state of his own prospects. In

the united view which they all took of their situation, they agreed that, for the present, patience was their best remedy, for there was no chance of a turn in their favour as far as regarded Mexican affairs, for some time to come. Barbara took heart, and did not despair of disposing of her cookery-book in verse to some good-natured publisher. Fanny avowed her determination to work her fingers to the bone in making fancy things, and Mary was only anxious to find a place as governess. — As for Abel, his hopes were quite elated with his essay as a teacher of the flute. It was true, their funds were rapidly diminishing, and that rent-day was fast approaching; but then more pupils might come: they had Tom Woodby for their friend, and he was rich,—then Edward Manby might return to them,—Mark Woodcock was not to be forgotten,—and on the whole, with such like prospects, and with a sincere reliance upon Providence, they determined that they could not call themselves very ill off.

Lord Demone, in leaving the house, was

more absorbed in admiration of Mary than ever. She, on the other hand, was happy in having found one who would in some measure screen her from the obtrusiveness of Tom, and therefore encouraged his conversation; which indeed she did, distinct from any other consideration, because he was an eminently agreeable man. He could talk good sense whenever he chose, and always managed to enliven whatever he had to say by so much happy illustration that it was impossible not to be amused. He was of an age which rendered his society harmless to a young person, as far as the attraction of looks might be of consequence; but, under that plea, he felt that he could make his advances unnoticed.

Great indeed must be the corruption of that man's heart who, at an age when he ought to be fighting his way to the end of his pilgrimage, having already completed more than one half of it,—is only bent upon pursuing a course of systematic depravity! But such was this personage. Living among those who were charmed by his wit, and who looked upon pleasure

as the only object in life, he was debarred from the wholesome restorative of serious thought by the never-ceasing poison of adulation. The supremacy decreed to him was his greatest trial; and he never acquired sufficient strength of mind to reflect how less to be envied he was in truth, than the man who, gradually retiring from the world, passes his life in ascertaining the corruption of his nature and in endeavouring to subdue it.

Tom was enraged when he found that Demone was likely to be his competitor in his own scheme of iniquity, and often did he upbraid himself for having been the means of introducing him to Abel as a scholar. As they were walking away, he laughed at Abel and his flute, and purposely made it a point to cry down the utter folly of learning that instrument from such a master. Demone, too shrewd not to discover the object of Tom's remarks and his real feelings, upheld Abel, and asserted that a morning thus spent was extremely pleasant; and that for his part, intending to pursue the science of music with ardour, he made

no doubt he should soon become a great proficient. Upon which, Tom, wishing further to sift Demone concerning Mary, and at the same time to turn the subject of their discourse, said, alluding to a poor dowager duchess, to whom it was reported that the peer was paying his addresses,—“By the bye, the report is that you are to marry the duchess: is that true?”

“True!” said Demone, — “it is about as true as that Mary Allnutt wishes to marry you. No, no! that report is utterly unfounded. — *Your grace* without dinner, will never do!”

“Excellent!” exclaimed Simpleton Sharp; “that’s the best thing I have heard to-day, —saying grace without dinner! Capital!”

Tom walked away sulky and disconcerted.

CHAPTER XIV.

An explosion of wickedness described, to which the innocent must be exposed when they associate with the guilty.

THE days now glided on in Golden-square very much in the same routine that we have just described. Abel gave lessons in the morning, and the afternoon was passed in the drawing-room in the company of the persons before named. Lord Demone had succeeded in making himself very acceptable in the eyes of Mary. As a man of the world, he was delighted to find a mind so new to all its ways, and she was never sated with the charm of his conversation. He would talk to her upon the various subjects which make up the business of a man of pleasure, and amuse her with anecdotes of everything then passing in the world.

She, who scarcely ever heard anything but discussions upon family affairs, listened to the details of passing events, the cabal of parties, the conduct of statesmen, and the intrigues of courts, with the interest of one who hears the narrative of some portion of history. He entertained her with accounts of modern literature, discussed the merits of books, and, without appearing to do so, informed her mind whilst he amused her imagination, seasoning his whole discourse by flashes of wit and happy allusions. His object was to secure her confidence, and every time he saw her, he felt assured that he was attaining that object. She was now always happy to see him, and he had so entirely succeeded in keeping Tom Woodby at a distance, that that circumstance alone was sufficient to awaken her gratitude.

One day, after he had been describing the success of a new play, and the attraction of the popular actor of the day, he proposed that Mary with her uncle and aunts should accompany him to see it. She was quite overjoyed

at the proposal, for she never had seen a play acted in her life, and immediately made it known to them. They at first acquiesced with the greatest alacrity, and nothing was talked of in the house but the pleasure which they were about to enjoy ; but when the more serious discussion of expense took place, Abel and Barbara found, that what with the hire of the coach, and what with the share of the box which they felt themselves called upon to propose paying, they would throw away as much money in the search of amusement as would suffice for several days' maintenance. They therefore felt it right to forego the enjoyment ; but when Lord Demone informed them that he could carry two in his chariot, and that a friend had lent him the box, Barbara and Abel, avowing their intention to stay at home, insisted that Fanny and Mary should accompany him. This was at length so arranged, and Tom Woodby having also been invited to be of the party, he agreed to meet them at the theatre.

When a man is totally without principle, by

which we mean religious principle, (for what other can there be?) his mind is fearfully open to temptation: with such a man, Satanic impulses have as great a range, as ruin and devastation have over a fair piece of ground which lies unfenced and unprotected; whichever of the vices assail him, he has nothing to oppose to it, but at once allows it to enter his heart as freely as if there was neither conscience nor retribution at hand to check him. The man of the world is only held back by what is commonly called honour; and where that honour does not intervene, finding nothing to curb him, he proceeds fearlessly in quest of his own gratification. In the instance before us, Lord Demone, in proposing this scheme of going to the playhouse with Mary, only followed a temptation which had long been goading him on, in spite of every moral and sacred consideration, to enjoy her society in a situation which might, if the chapter of accidents should operate in his favour, deprive her of the protection of her relations, and throw her into his power. He depended

much upon innate corruption, and calculated that our natural depravity would alone advance his object; for his own heart was too vicious to conceive that religious sentiments can establish such thorough detestation of vice, as to preserve their owner in purity and innocence.

Aunt Fanny, Mary, and Demone, proceeded with all due decorum to the play-house. They occupied a small private-box near the stage. Tom Woodby followed soon after. Mary, surprised at all she saw and heard, was so delighted by the pageant and the show, that it succeeded in throwing her mind from off its usual sedateness, and she became a perfect child in emotion and curiosity. Aunt Fanny was equally struck, but she was acted upon by her old enemy—imbecile vanity, which at once made her suppose that the thousand and one pair of eyes glancing in her direction from the pit, were solely attracted by her beauty,—forgetting all the while that next to her sat one whose charms were without compare in the whole house. She looked, so she flattered

herself, a being made up of delicacy and sentiment, and occasionally, in a proper attitude, glanced "unutterable things."

We will not go through the whole history of the four or five hours passed in the play-house; but merely assert that Lord Demone made himself so agreeable to Mary that he entirely engrossed her attention, when it was not taken up by the play; whilst Tom, who dodged about in the background, occasionally communicated his remarks to Aunt Fanny in a low, undertoned growl.

The performance having at length drawn to a close, Demone, after duly shawling and cloak-ing the ladies, drew Mary's hand within his arm, and straightway conducted her through the crowd, followed by Tom and Aunt Fanny. He pushed on, dragging his companion after him, who, unaccustomed to such a scene, half-frightened, half-amused, but only anxious to get home, followed him without once looking behind. He was well acquainted with all the avenues of the theatre, and, having succeeded in getting clear of the crowd, he at

length reached the spot where his carriage was in waiting. There he came to a halt, as if in expectation of Aunt Fanny ; and having paused for a few minutes, he at length persuaded Mary to get in, for fear of catching cold : saying, “ Your aunt will no doubt follow with Woodby.” He then got into the carriage also, and desired the coachman to drive on.

It was now, for the first time, that poor Mary felt the loss of her aunt’s presence ; for, although she did not at first imagine any harm could accrue to her, still woman, however unpractised in life, feels an impropriety almost instinctively, particularly when her character may by possibility be assailed.

Mary inquired eagerly for her aunt, and when she found the carriage was proceeding without her, begged that it might be stopped, for that she was determined to wait until she should appear. Demone, afraid of alarming her, acceded to her wishes, until she was appeased — they then drove on, but still Mary became more and more uneasy as they advanced ; and when she observed the streets,

and thought that they were not the same through which they passed on going to the theatre, she became frightened outright—other circumstances tended to frighten her still more:—she now would listen to nothing that Demone could say in extenuation; in great agony of mind, she did not cease to look out of the window, and implore to be allowed to get out. Demone endeavoured to take advantage of the confidence which he had so long laboured to inspire, but he only increased her alarm. Gazing into the street, by the glare of the lamps she perceived a figure which she thought was well known to her. Looking at it with great earnestness, she at length recognised Mark Woodcock, who was walking along with hasty strides, accompanied by a friend. She immediately let down the glass, and cried out with all her might and strength, “Mr. Mark, save me! save me!”

Mark, hearing a well-known voice, started as it struck his ear, and immediately pursued the carriage, escorted by his friend. It drove on at an increased rate, which made it difficult

for them to keep up with it; however, they ran with their best speed, keeping it in view, determined to trace it to the spot where it would stop. To their joy, it suddenly came to a stand, owing to a barrier thrown across the street, (the place being under repair,) which obliged the coachman to turn about. Mary, having lost all hope of help, had by this time almost fallen into hysterics, when to her utter joy, just as the carriage was slowly backing round, the door was opened, and she beheld Mark Woodcock, who, almost exhausted with the race he had run, and seconded by his friend, had succeeded in seizing the door handle. She threw herself forwards, whilst he received her in his arms. Demone would have detained her, and was about to jump out and assail her champion; but when he perceived him to be a strong, muscular man, supported by one of equal powers, he found it wiser to stifle his rage and disappointment, and leaving her to take her own course, he ordered his carriage to drive away.

When Mary felt herself released from her companion, and in safety with one who, she was confident, would take care of her, she nearly fainted from that revulsion which so often takes place after violent emotion. Mark, who to this moment had not been able to discover the reason of this call upon his interference, tended her with the greatest care and humanity; and as in truth they were not very far from Golden-square, although Demone's intentions were anything but to have driven thither, so they were not long in arriving at that place.

As soon as Mary reached the door of her own house, she was so entranced with joy that she could almost have kissed her deliverer with gratitude; whilst he, surprised to find himself so suddenly transformed into a hero of romance, vowed in his inmost heart that he never would lose an opportunity of devoting himself to her service when and wherever those services might be required of him.

Fanny and her conductor, upon arrival, had raised such a hue-and-cry at Lord Demone's

conduct in leaving her to find her own way home, that Aunt Bab and Abel, who half asleep were waiting for their return, were roused into the most active state of liveliness. They entered but little into Fanny's feelings with regard to her own ill-usage, but called loudly for their niece. "Where can she be gone?—what can have happened to her?" were exclamations which they never ceased to make, until their fears were excited to a most alarming degree by seeing Tom Woodby, with a mysterious air, shrug up his shoulders, and hearing him confess that he would not trust Demone alone with one of his sisters, or with any young person he cared for, for anything the world could offer.

"Why, what do you think he would do to her?" inquired Aunt Bab with the greatest anxiety.

"I can't say," said Tom, too happy to have an opportunity of venting his rage at being so entirely outreached in his scheme; "but this I will say, that Demone is well known for being the most dangerous man,

the most celebrated lady-killer in the United Kingdom, and that he actually sticks at nothing."

"A lady-killer!" roared out Bab. "God bless us! he's not going to murder the poor girl!—is he?"

"A lady-killer!" echoed Aunt Fanny.

"Here! give me my hat and stick," exclaimed Abel: "I'll go after them: only tell me which way they went, and if she is to be found on the surface of the globe, I'll find her. Villain! rascal!" he exclaimed, gnashing his teeth with agony, and rushing down stairs with the impetuosity of a desperate man.

"Run after him, Mr. Woodby," exclaimed Barbara to Tom; "for Heaven's sake let us not lose him too—you don't know how violent he is when he is taken in this manner."

Tom, followed by Aunts Bab and Fanny, rushed down stairs after Abel, who had already seized his stick, put on his hat, and was fumbling at the street-door to get out, when Mark Woodcock's violent knock from without was heard, with Mary as his companion. The

door being opened, the bewildered maiden soon found herself in the arms of her relations, who almost wept with joy at seeing her again in safety.

“What has happened, my dear Mary?” inquired Aunt Bab, who had preserved her self-possession more than any of the party. Mary could not answer, so convulsed was she with every sort of feeling. “Do explain to us,”—she continued, addressing Mark,—“Mr. Woodcock, how did all this take place?”

“Why, ma’am,” said Mark, “I’m not sufficiently able to explain, for I was taken quite unawares; but as I was walking along, I heard the voice of an interesting female vociferating after me, upon which I ran with all my speed, accompanied by a friend of mine, right after the carriage, and, as good luck would have it, it stopped. Upon which I opened the door, and there I saw the criminal with Miss Mary, he, insisting and she persisting, until she came tumbling out right on the top of me. The criminal would have assaulted me had I let him; but seeing my friend and I too much

for him, he thought fit to sneak off; so we completely did him out of his wicked purposes, and having got lawful possession, here she is, as safe and sound as the Monument."

By this time Mary was sufficiently restored to herself to confirm what Mark had stated, and she made her acknowledgments to her protector in a manner that secured his friendship for ever; whilst all present were loud in expressing their indignation against the unprincipled causer of this disturbance.

"He shall never come into this house again," exclaimed Bab, "whatever he may say or do!"

"If he sticks at nothing," said Fanny, "I should like to know what he will try to do next?"

Abel would have spoken, but he discovered a disaster had happened to his mouth, rendering the act of utterance unpleasant, and which to his dismay, when he ascertained the cause, he found to proceed from the loss of certain false teeth he had long cherished, and which had fallen during the excitement of the evening and from the violence of his vociferations.

It became an object of the first importance to find them, for upon their existence depended his power of blowing the flute ; for it would be impossible to restore them without incurring much greater expense than they could at present afford. An immediate search was therefore commenced, in which he was assisted by Tom, who, now finding that he was likely to have the coast clear, and every facility before him of pursuing his villanous scheme, sought to ingratiate himself in the family by every act of obsequiousness. It was late before the party retired for the night, Abel being the greatest sufferer, for he went to bed toothless.

CHAPTER XV.

The family in their distress apply to a powerful though distant cousin.

THE excitement of the preceding night had not subsided on the following morning, and the family met together to breakfast in no very satisfactory mood. Not one of them had passed a quiet night,—each had a grievance to complain of; but what remained uppermost in their minds was Lord Demone's conduct.

“I'll ask Mark Woodcock, the next time I see him,” said Aunt Barbara, “whether it would not be possible to take the law of that vile man for such conduct. It stands to reason that no one has a right to seize another by force and gallop her half across the city in a coach, without asking her with your leave or

by your leave, and that a young girl too not eighteen, who is obliged to cry out for her life in the middle of the public streets."

"I cannot think so ill of any man," said Abel, "to suppose that designedly he would inflict such cruelty upon those who have never offended him, as to injure one they cherish so tenderly as our dear Mary. I dare say," said he to her, at the same time patting her cheek, "I dare say you were more frightened than hurt, if the truth was known."

"Indeed he hurt me very much," said Mary blushing; "I thought he would have torn my gown from off my shoulders, when he found that I was determined to go with Mr. Mark."

"He is an odious wicked man," said Bab; "I wonder, Abel, how you can venture to say a word in his favour. Such are the vile wretches, who with their smooth tongues do more mischief in the world than your open murderers."

"We have no right to judge any man," said Abel. "Can you say how that very person has been educated—what examples he has had

before his eyes—to what his mind has been directed—what the peculiar nature of his constitution — what the force of temptation he has to contend with? If you cannot answer these questions and a thousand others of a similar nature, you ought not to judge him. There is only one who is capable of judging him, and that is his Maker.”

“Then you do not allow me to discriminate between right and wrong—to approve of the one, and to censure the other?”

“That I deny,” said Abel. “We must abhor vice and love virtue; —and we are to follow God’s commands with our undivided strength—and we may censure particular actions, and laud others, but no one man can entirely judge another. As I said before, that is left to his Maker and his ultimate Judge.”

“Well, nobody shall ever persuade me,” said Aunt Fanny, “that Lord Demone is not an odious man; although I will allow that he is a very civil one, and even very amusing!”

“He shall never come into this house again,” said Bab, “as long as I have a word to

say in it—not even if he comes to pay for his flute lessons, which I suppose now he never will—mean wretch that he is !”

“ He has injured us very much,” said Abel, “ by insulting our niece,—but that is an indignity which we must bear with patience ; and he is also the cause of making me lose my teeth, another real grievance, for I cannot replace them without incurring an expense which we cannot now afford, and thus I am prevented from gaining my livelihood.”

“ Yes,” said Bab, “ you must give up your flute as well as your vile scholar ; and as we have lost him, so we shall lose that foolish shadow of his, Simpleton Sharp, who goes about laughing at his jokes, like the little chimney-sweeper who echoes ‘ sweep ’ the moment the big chimney-sweeper has said the word.”

“ We must turn our minds to something else, and that instantly !” said Abel.

“ We must indeed ; for I do believe,” said Bab, “ that we have only a small sum left at the bankers’, and they never allow any one to overdraw.”

“I have been thinking,” said Abel, after a long pause, “as I did not see Lord Knutsford, and since nothing has been elicited by my first application, that we might apply again, and that by letter. Suppose I write to him and state our situation?”

“A good thought!” exclaimed Bab, “suppose you do. Much will depend upon the sort of letter you write—I will help you.”

“The simpler the better,” said Abel. “A plain statement of facts is always the best mode of appealing to a man of sense, which I suppose he is, being a cabinet minister; and he will then draw his own inferences.”

“We must give him something more than facts,” said Bab; “we must let him know how we are related to him—he must know who our grandfathers and grandmothers were, and that will do more for us than plain facts. I am sure I could almost cry when I think of our dear old grandmother, and I dare say he will too when he thinks of his;—we must touch him through the heart.”

“Well, I will go and write the letter,” said

Abel, "and then you shall see it and make your suggestions;" upon which he retired to his room, and, after some thought, wrote as follows :

" MY LORD,

" I venture to state that my necessities impel me to write to you. I address myself to you, because you are my relation,—a fact which I entreat your lordship to give me an opportunity of proving. My two sisters, myself, and niece, were living peaceably in the country, when ruin overtook us, wholly without our fault ; and we have been obliged to come to London, where, unless you protect us by giving us some means of gaining our bread, we must either die in prison or in a workhouse. If your lordship would be kind enough to grant me an interview, I would more fully explain the nature of our distress ; and in hope of a speedy answer,

" I am, my Lord,

" Your obedient servant and cousin,

" ABEL ALLNUTT."

“Why, that will never do, Abel,” said Aunt Bab; “you have said nothing about our relationship — nothing about our great-grand-fathers; if we do not tell him who his parents were, how is he ever to know it?—it stands to reason that you must tell him. The letter is too short, indeed it is; you ought to give him at least two or three sheets full: these sort of people like attentions, and you ought not to write to them as if you was writing to a grocer. You must appeal to his heart, — it stands to reason that you must: tell him what brought us to Golden-square, and he will feel for us; and say a good deal about Mexican bonds, and of the abominable conduct of the Woodbys to us. You have not informed him who John is, and what a distinguished officer he is; then you must describe yourself and your weak state of health, and tell him how old we are all getting, and that it is a shame that we should be left to starve, and that we have tried literature, and tuition, and giving lessons on the flute—all that will touch his heart; but we must depend most upon our mutual

ancestors — lay great stress upon them. You may be certain that blood tells after all.”

Abel listened with patience to what his sister said, and, after passing some time in combating her argument in favour of long letters, he was persuaded to introduce a line or two into the one he had written explanatory of mutual relationship, and having done so, he carefully folded it up and proceeded himself to deliver it at the very residence of Lord Knutsford. This having been accomplished, they determined to wait the event with resignation; but there was one circumstance which gave them great cause for anxiety, and that was not having heard from Edward Manby for some considerable time. He knew the warmth of his affection for them all, a feeling which would make him punctual in writing to them regularly, and still many days were expired, and no letter arrived. Mary, too, had partaken of her uncle's anxiety, although she had not ventured to express it; and as those once accustomed to affliction are apt to expect a continuation of adversity, so their minds

did not fail to apprehend more misery in store from that quarter.

When Tom Woodby arrived the morning after to take his lesson on the flute, he was not displeased to find that, owing to Abel's loss, he could not continue to teach that instrument ; and living under the apprehension that some other person might slip in between him and his schemes upon Mary, he loudly applauded Abel's decision. Having thus got rid of a rival in Lord Demone, Tom had, however, to contend with more formidable difficulties in the opposition which his own family made to any further acquaintance with the Allnutts. His mother, Lady Thomson, and his sisters, had observed the marked attention he had paid to Mary at the dinner already described ; and when they heard that he was a constant visiter at the Allnutts', they became alarmed lest he should throw himself away—so they called it—upon one whom they despised, and whom they were pleased to look upon as a wretched scrub and a penniless pauper. Mrs. Goold Woodby was the more awake to such

a circumstance, at this particular juncture, because she was flushed with prospects of worldly prosperity. It was determined that she and her daughters were to go to court to be presented; it was confidently whispered about that the male Woodby was to receive the honour of knighthood—and besides, a baronetcy might be in the wind. She had, moreover, succeeded in getting a foreign ambassador—so she called him, but in truth the *chargé d'affaires* of Hesse Smokanpoff—to dine with her. She was promised to be introduced to a secretary of the Turkish ambassador, and was in negotiation for a Persian prince and the descendant of an Indian nabob. Was it probable, therefore, with this brilliant career before her, she should ever agree to see her son Tom, the heir of Belvedere, and perhaps the future baronet, dangling after Mary Allnutt, —a girl whom nobody knew, whose uncle was a teacher of the German flute, and whose aunts would soon be reduced to wielding a mangle or perhaps going about as getters-up of small linen? The ladies in question were

visited by Demone the morning after his discomfiture by Mark Woodcock,—a visit he had intentionally planned in order to destroy any unfavourable report that might be spread to his disadvantage, and thus overwhelm him with ridicule; and also to give a hint to the family concerning the position in which Tom was placed.

“So my friend Tom, I hear,” said Demone, “is to marry the beautiful Mary Allnutt.”

“Tom ! marry !” exclaimed Mrs. Woodby.

“Mary Allnutt !” roared Lady Thomson.

“Ay,” said the other; “*Curius Dentatus*, like a second Orpheus, has fascinated him with his flute; *Barbarossa* has wagged her beard and exercises tyranny over him; and *la Fanée* acts as decoy-duck. They ’ll have him as sure as fate.”

“That they never shall,” exclaimed Mrs. Woodby, her face flushed, her hands clenched, and her eyes darting fury. “If *Curious ’tatoes* ever again dares to teach Tom how to play the flute, I ’ll—I ’ll—I ’ll play the deuce with him. *Curious ’tatoes* indeed! with his

white ugly face and ill-made pantaloons. And as for old Barbara, she shall answer to me for that piece of impudence—I that have done so much for her. Didn't I subscribe to her pitiful charity-school all to please her, and didn't I take old Brown into our service all to make it agreeable to her,—why should I take her leavings?—I won't be so bamboozled: and now she's going to cheat us out of our Tom. No, no,—that she shall not do; happen what may, I'll show them up to the astonished world; and if that oaf, old Fanny, comes here with her airs and graces, I'll tell her that none of her fine words shall operate any effect here."

Lady Thomson, who had been anxious to speak, as soon as this effusion was ended burst out as follows:—"You are perfectly right,—you must not allow Tom to domineer over you in this fashion any longer. It is a duty you owe to yourself to stop all intercourse with the Allnutts: if they really belong to Lord Knutsford, as they pretend to do, then out of regard to your own character and to the aristocracy you ought to be civil to them; but really

when it is quite plain that they as much belong to his lordship as they do to the king of the Hottentots, and that they are nothing but poor miserable wretches who are known by nobody, and who can't even make themselves fit to be looked at, why then it is only right, and belonging to your station in society, to avoid their acquaintance. Did you ever see such a fright as Barbarossa made of herself the other night? She positively turned that old grey gown, as well known all over the country as the parish steeple, in order to hide a certain spot upon it as visible as an island on a map; — and then Fanny's cap was actually composed of old shreds, which made her look like a chimney-sweeper; whilst that well-remembered cherry silk, being faded yellow, will soon die of a green old age. As for the girl Mary, she was a thing to send into the housekeeper's room to dust the chairs: she looked like the housemaid, with her cotton gown and black stuff shoes. It was quite odious for all that to see how the men ran after her; and you, Lord Demone," she con-

tinued, addressing herself to him, "were one of the first to lay yourself at her feet."

"Ah, my dear lady!" said Demone; "wherever there is a beautiful face to be gazed at, we don't look at the gown;—a diamond may be wrapt up in a piece of brown paper, but it is still a diamond. Mary Allnutt is surprisingly beautiful, there is no doubt of that."

"After all," said Anne Woodby, "she is no such great things either. Surely her nose is not long enough,—and then she has a defect in her mouth;—besides that, some people have said she squints. I know she once began to have a hump."

"Ah, that hump has now got into her chest!" said Demone with a satirical smile on his lips, "for in truth there never was seen a finer bust."

"I see you are determined to be the girl's upholder at our expense, my lord," said Mrs. Woodby, reddening with anger.

"As for being her upholder," said he, "you must allow me to deny that, for her beauty is

so great, that it requires but little furniture to set it off;—as to expense it is nothing, for you have already said that that furniture is cotton.”

“ I said nothing about furniture,” said Mrs. Woodby, unconscious of the drift of his humour ; “ but this I will say, that if Tom marries her, then I will insist upon Mr. Goold Woodby making short work of it, and cutting him off in his will with a shilling.”

“ You are perfectly right,” exclaimed Lady Thomson ; “ you have no business to allow the respectability of your name to be contaminated by an alliance with a beggar.”

“ No, nor shall it,” said Mrs. Woodby, “ although that beggar should be as handsome as Venus herself.”

Much more was said on this occasion which does not require repeating, and therefore we will proceed to the following chapter ; but Demone accomplished his object, by entirely turning the current of attention from himself towards Tom, which was all he wanted to achieve.

CHAPTER XVI.

Vicissitudes and mortifications.

ONE of the peculiar characteristics of Tom Woodby was his perverseness. His very look, with his spherical head and round features, was the personification of that hateful quality, alas ! so strongly stamped upon all the posterity of Adam. The opposition of his family to his visiting the Allnutts was the only sure mode of making him increase his attentions to them. The very next time he appeared at home after the visit paid by Lord Demone, his mother, Lady Thomson, and his sisters, in a body set upon him like so many hornets, and assailed him with every taunt and every argument which they could devise to draw him off

from Mary. They so persecuted his ears with the miseries he would endure were he to venture to marry her, that from sheer obstinacy he would that moment have rushed to make a proposal to her, had he not already planned in his wicked head the scheme of seduction to which we have before alluded. Demone had been instrumental in proclaiming Mary's beauty among the depraved and the licentious; Simpleton Sharp had duly echoed his assertions; and Tom had done his utmost to make it known that he was the accepted favourite. She was described as a fresh country beauty, one but little known, and niece to a teacher of the German flute; and such had been the description given of her matchless charms, that vice had long inscribed her in the list of those devoted to ruin. These circumstances, more than anything else, had so worked upon the ambition and vanity of the vicious Tom, that he was determined more than ever, now that he found the field open to him after Demone's discomfiture, to push his nefarious scheme. He therefore became doubly assiduous in en-

deavouring to secure the friendship of Mary's uncle and aunts, who, in the distress that was gradually creeping over them, were happy to have any one in the shape of a friend to whom they might have recourse.

Barbara and Fanny both encouraged his addresses to Mary, and began to speculate deeply upon the possibility of his marrying her. They never indulged the hope that he would assist them in pecuniary difficulties, because they knew how much Abel was averse to such a proceeding; but they argued thus, that once the husband of their niece, he would never allow them to sink into utter poverty, but would surely give them a helping hand towards gaining their livelihood. In the meanwhile they remained at home waiting with impatience the result of Abel's application to Lord Knutsford.

One morning, just after they had cast up their accounts at the bankers, when they found themselves fast approaching to that appalling result, a balance on the wrong side,—an unpretending rap was heard at the door, and

presently was introduced into the drawing-room a man, who, by his appearance, answered to his modest announcement. He was a respectable tradesman-like looking personage, with quiet manners, unobtrusive in his deportment, but still with the air of one intent upon business. From amongst a bundle of papers which he drew from his pocket he extracted a letter, which he unfolded, and, addressing Abel, begged to know whether it had been written by him. Abel recognised at once the letter he had addressed to Lord Knutsford, and immediately answered in the affirmative. Barbara, overjoyed in having at length received a communication which she imagined came direct from Lord Knutsford, drew near and listened to every word which his lordship's supposed messenger uttered, with the most respectful attention. Fanny and Mary also stood by, and perhaps no group was ever more worthy of a painter's pencil.

He then exhibited a paper containing a printed form of questions, which he proceeded to make to Abel, and noted down as fast as he was answered.

He inquired of what place he was a native ; how old he was ; how long he had been a resident in Golden-square ; what rent he paid ; if he was in any arrears, and the name and residence of his landlord. They began to think it strange that Lord Knutsford should ask so many questions, and that he should hitherto have inquired nothing concerning their relationship to his family. The visiter then continued to inquire whether they were of any trade, to what they had been brought up, and what business they had recently followed. At these questions, Barbara showed symptoms of impatience, — her pride began to take fire ; — Fanny's feelings of gentility were roused, and the two sisters looked at each other with something like anger. He then inquired whether they were single or married. Abel answered that they were all single, — Barbara bit her lip, — Fanny heaved a sigh.

“ Then you have no children ? ” said the man.

“ None,” answered Abel.

“ But who is this ? ” said the visiter, pointing to Mary ; “ is not she your child ? ”

“ She is my niece,” said Abel ; “ and she lives with us.”

“ Have you any more nieces ? I must see them all : and pray let me know whether they have been properly instructed at a national or a Sunday school.”

Barbara could hold out no longer, but said with some asperity of accent, “ But pray, sir, what has all this to do with our application to Lord Knutsford, — does he wish to know whether our niece has been educated at a Sunday school ?”

“ I am only fulfilling my instructions,” said the visiter mildly : “ will you allow me to proceed ?”

“ Proceed by all means,” said Abel ; “ we have nothing to conceal, — we can only be thankful to whoever will take the trouble to inquire into our situation ; and if his lordship wishes to make these questions, we are ready to answer them.”

The visiter then continued to inquire whether they had anything in pawn, its value, — what were the earnings of the whole family

per week,—whether they had ever received parochial relief,—what was the cause of their distress,—and if they could refer to any respectable person to speak to their character, and to the truth of their statement.

At this last question, Barbara became quite indignant, and exclaimed: “Has Lord Knutsford sent you here to insult us? surely there must be some mistake,—he must know that this branch of his family is in existence:” then addressing Abel, she said, “I told you that you were wrong in not entering into a full explanation in your letter who our great-grandfather was.” Then turning to the man, who seemed in no wise astonished at the scene, she exclaimed, “You dare to ask us whether any respectable person will speak for our characters! Go and ask half of the nobility of England. The Allnutts have been allied to royalty,—they have married and intermarried with dukes, marquises, and earls. If we are poor, the disgrace is not with us; but it is with our family that allows us to be so. Go, sir, and tell Lord Knutsford that if he chooses

to send us a list of insulting questions, he must not be surprised to receive this answer, which you may give him as soon as you please, that he is both unfeeling and impertinent, and that if he will not relieve our distress, he need not add to it by his insolence."

"My dear Barbara," said Abel, interposing his quiet manner to stop her violence; "I dare say if you will allow this gentleman to speak, he will explain what appears to you difficult. Pray, sir, did Lord Knutsford send you to us?"

"Lord Knutsford !" said the visiter. "No, sir, I come from the Mendicity Society,—I am one of its officers, and am sent here on duty."

"The Mendicity Society !" exclaimed Bab; "and pray what is that?"

"It is a society composed of charitable persons," answered the visiter, "whose object is to inquire into the cases of mendicants with a view of relieving their distress, and detecting imposture."

"And what has Lord Knutsford to do with it?" said Bab.

“ He is one of those charitable persons,” answered the other : “ and according to the report I give in reference to the letter which you addressed to him, so it is likely that he will act.”

“ Then you are to decide whether he is our relation or not ?” said Bab, her face assuming a look of indignation. “ You will please to tell his lordship that we want no such interference; and that if he requires a whole society to direct the feelings of his heart, we have nothing more to say to him.”

“ My dear Barbara,” said Abel, “ you are really quite in the wrong to take up the matter thus. I dare say Lord Knutsford’s intentions are good, and that the Mendicity Society, of which this gentleman is the agent, is most useful and praiseworthy. We certainly had no intention to place our concerns before the public, and we did hope that, in consequence of our affinity, Lord Knutsford might have given us the means of gaining an honest livelihood ; but since he has judged otherwise, we must submit, not with pride and anger, but with humi-

lity and proper resignation.--Sir," said Abel, addressing the visiter, " have the goodness to inform his lordship that it is not our wish to give him any further trouble; and pray excuse the indifferent reception which I am afraid you will complain that you have received at our hands."

Upon hearing these words, the visiter took his leave, making all proper apologies for what he presumed was a mistake. A mistake it really was, for Lord Knutsford's secretary, who was accustomed to attend to the numerous begging letters addressed to his lordship, had included Abel's with others of a mendicant description, and had in due course sent them for examination to the Mendicity Society, to which he was a liberal contributor; and thus was produced the scene we have just described.

Had Aunt Bab been less proud, and could Abel have crushed those feelings which are inherent in a gentleman born, it is probable that the proper explanations made by the visiting officer would have directed Lord Knutsford's notice to their case, and every relief in

his power would have been bestowed. As it turned out, the whole proceeding was quashed, and they were left apparently without hope, for all their expedients were exhausted.*

“What is to be done now?” said Barbara, her recent excitement having gone by, and the real truth appearing before her mind in all its severity. “Nothing more is left to hope. The rent must be paid to-morrow, and we have not enough money to meet the demand.”

“We must sell all we have,” said Abel calmly.

“I entreat you !” exclaimed Mary with great earnestness, “to allow me to seek a place as a governess, as a servant, as anything ; whatever I should gain would increase your means

* Having been for some time a manager of the Mendicity Society, the author cannot refrain availing himself of this opportunity humbly to express his conviction of its vast utility in promoting the ends of practical charity ; for whilst it gives security to those who distribute, it ensures justice and an impartial investigation of their case to those who ask ; and (were it carried to the full extent of which it is capable) would afford decided protection against annoyance and imposture to the public in general.

of living. I am young and strong, and there is no doubt that I could secure a sufficiently good recommendation to be received in the house of honest persons: I would work day and night rather than see you continue in this painful, needy state. Do, my dear uncle," she said, taking Abel's hand,—“allow me to seek for a situation. I am sure, at least, that I could maintain myself, as well as add to your means.”

“It is surprising that we do not hear from Edward,” said Abel in great perturbation. “I wrote to him but the other day to inform him to what straits we are now approaching: he is the only real friend now to whom we can venture to disclose our situation.”

“We have Tom Woodby, too,” said Fanny in deep despondency: “I think we may look upon him as our friend.”

“I do not wish to say anything against Tom,” said Abel; “he is very attentive; he comes here constantly; and I dare say if we required a service from him that he would be good-natured enough to perform it; but I do

not think his principles of conduct are the same as ours: he lives entirely for the world; its pleasures and its vanities appear to engross the whole of his thoughts, and he seems to think they are the sole objects for which he has been sent into life. With such a mind, I for one have nothing in common; — the cheerfulness of youth must always have attraction; but unless it be allied with the love of virtue, it is only attractive as the beauty of a flower is attractive, — to look at, and sigh over its brief existence. Tom never evinces the smallest taste for anything pure and religious; I rather fear he is a scoffer; that very doubt tends to estrange us: there can be no approach to mutual confidence — to that free and unrestrained exchange of thoughts and sentiments, without which there can exist no friendship, and which is so well established between me and Edward Manby. He, indeed, is a totally different youth, awfully impressed with the sacred truths of religion: humble in his own esteem, although strong in his faith, he has secured to himself more of that ‘glorious li-

berty,' so difficult of attainment, than I ever thought it possible for frail corrupt man to acquire here on earth. That liberty gives him such visible happiness, both of countenance and deportment, that it can but arise from the enjoyment of that peace which has truly been said to 'pass all understanding.' I am quite certain that under all circumstances, in prosperity or in adversity—in sickness or in health—in the deepest trials of the affections, as under the severest thralldom of injustice, Edward would ever be the same,—the still small voice would ever be heard at the bottom of his heart, comforting him in distress, sustaining him in moments of temptation, and giving him the cheering applause of conscience when the temptation was overcome. I could talk for ever upon the virtues and excellencies of that admirable youth. What has become of him I know not,—I fear something has happened, or I am certain he would have written to us."

Mary's eyes filled with tears, and her breast heaved with quick and convulsive sighs when she heard the eulogium which her uncle passed

upon her lover ; her mind responded with the tenderest feelings to every word uttered in his praise, for she knew that it was true and she would willingly have poured out her whole heart to her uncle, so overflowing was it with a thousand conflicting and stirring emotions ; but all she could do at present was to express her surprise at Edward's silence, and to attribute it to anything but neglect.

Barbara and Fanny, who had long buoyed themselves up with the hope that Tom Woodby would propose for Mary, undertook to speak in his favour, and argued, that although he never talked upon matters of religion, yet still it was unfair to say that he was a scoffer. They contrasted his conduct towards them with that of his family, showing that they had evidently shunned their acquaintance, whilst he had not failed even for one day to call, and really to make himself more amiable and attentive to them, than Edward himself had ever been.

Abel finished the conversation by announcing that he intended on the following morning to

proceed into the city to see Mr. Longhead, the banker, in order to learn whether something favourable might not have turned up in Mexican affairs ; and whether he would be inclined to make an advance upon the security of their bond. Barbara shook her head, and asserted that all bankers had hard hearts. Fanny was cheered by the reflection that on the first interview Mr. Longhead had proved well-bred and civil, which she asserted were qualities always portending good-nature and liberality.

CHAPTER XVII.

Temporary relief frequently only paves the way to greater mischief.

ABEL took his departure on the following morning, at the proper hour, to obtain an interview with his banker, whilst Aunts Barbara and Fanny, with Mary, remained at home, waiting with apprehension for the appearance of the person appointed to receive the rent, in the same manner that one frequently sees women in a playhouse, shutting their eyes and stopping their ears when a pistol or a gun is about to be fired off. They had a thousand vague ideas of the misfortunes likely to ensue if payment was delayed. They had heard of distressing for rent, had seen pictures of its horrors, and read heart-rending tales which

described the ruin and misery of penniless tenants, and the stern inflexibility of ruthless landlords. Aunt Fanny, who had heard of an execution in a house, insisted that it could only mean something bloody and horrible; whilst Barbara gravely asserted that no such act could take place without the sanction of a jury—at least, she said it was so in the country, although possibly it might be different in town. Not being quite certain on what day their half year's rent was due, they fondly hoped it might be deferred, although again they agreed that the man might call at any hour.

Barbara had fully made up her mind, should he appear, to lay a true and full statement of their situation before him—to tell him the whole story of Mr. Woodby and the Mexican bonds—to describe to him the various excellencies of John's character and his great resource in difficulties—to give him a general view of the Allnutt family,—its antiquity—its former riches—its affinity to the aristocracy, and its present prospects. She was quite

certain, and she asserted that it stood to reason, that when a sensible man—which she concluded the collector of the rent would be—had received this explanation, that he would acquiesce in his security of ultimate payment, and that he would even be too happy to keep them on as tenants. She maintained that the education which collectors of rent received rendered them enlightened men, and as their profession brought them into contact with great varieties of character, this present personage would not fail to discover the integrity of their minds, and the sincerity of their promises. She succeeded at length in clothing this imaginary person with qualities so exalted and magnanimous, that she finished by driving all the apprehensions she had previously entertained from before her, and placed herself in a position quite equal to meet the impending event. Fanny, however, who was prone to create beatic visions of men in her brain, on this occasion could not raise the collector in question to the pinnacle of perfection which we have just described. She could not divest him

of certain earthly appendages that naturally belong to collectors. She saw before her the snug brown wig, the grey stockings, and round-toed shoes, the inkhorn in the button-hole, the pen in hand, and the account-book. She had never heard of a beautiful collector of rent, and moreover had never seen one; and although she was ready enough to admit that he might have a feeling heart, and might be touched with a pathetic story, still she avowed that she would never go among that class of men for her hero of romance. Mary was deep in thought upon her Edward, turning in her mind all the various causes which might have prevented his writing, and thus the whole discussion upon the collector passed by her unheeded.

She was however brought to her senses by the appearance of Tom Woodby, who had become more frequent in his visits and more urgent in his attempts to engage her attention during the last few days than he had ever been before. He, in truth, felt how little successful he had hitherto been in forwarding his

suit, and consequently had turned over in his wicked mind every possible scheme for its advancement. He felt secure of the aunts, and hoped the uncle's approbation would follow; but he was awed before the uncompromising dignity and strength of virtue of the lovely maiden herself. Goaded on by the ridicule of some of his associates, who taunted him for want of success after his vain boasting, he at one time thought of carrying her off by force; but then, dastard as he was, he became alarmed at the consequences, and dreamt of a gibbet and the hulks. He then began to consider upon the expediency of proposing marriage, but was stopped short by the announcement made to him by his parents, that if such an event took place he was from that moment disinherited. He became quite bewildered, and occasionally thought of abandoning the pursuit, but still he clung to the chapter of accidents which he hoped might turn over a fortunate leaf in his favour. He was aware of the family distress; he reckoned that his money and their ruin might promote

his views, and therefore at length determined to keep himself in love more intensely than ever, until he saw that ruin complete. The moment was now not far distant when his villany would receive every encouragement he could desire.

He had not been long arrived, and was more than ever welcomed with cordiality and even adulation by Barbara and Fanny, when a knock was heard at the door, and shortly after old Betty came bustling up to say that there was a gentleman below who had called for six months' rent of the lodging. This produced a visible sensation upon all present. Barbara, notwithstanding her previous views upon collectors, was full of nervous apprehension: Fanny said, "What can he mean by coming to-day?" Mary was calm, but pale; Tom looked like Mephistophiles, the smile of a demon on his lips, with the quick eye of triumph glancing under his brow.

"What sort of a looking man is he?" said Barbara.

"Indeed, ma'am," said Betty, "he is a very nice-looking young man."

“Young man!” exclaimed Fanny; “that is odd!”

“What did he say?” said Aunt Bab with emphasis.

“Oh, he only said that he came for rent; quite genteel like,” said Betty.

“Did he look positive and determined,” said Bab, “or did he appear lenient?”

“Why, he did lean again the wall, and that’s the truth of it,” said old Betty; “he seemed quite positive about that.”

“Let us go and look at him first,” said Fanny; upon which she gently slid out of the door, and bending her head over the staircase, took an accurate survey of the man. She returned with a face quite beaming with satisfaction. “He really is a very nice-looking young man,” said the old beauty. “He does not look a bit like a collector; he puts me in mind of Edward Manby; he has his height—his hair is nicely combed—he grows the prettiest little beard—his coat is black—he wears grey kid-gloves, and is resting gracefully, and apparently patiently, with his back against the wall,

with his hat in his hand. He has neither inkstand at his button nor pen behind his ear : indeed, now I think of it, a flower is in his button-hole, and indeed he is a very nice young man."

" I'll go and speak to him," said Barbara ;—
" or let us have him up here."

" Do," said Fanny ; " I am sure Mr. Woodby will excuse it."

" By all means," said Tom, looking full of exultation ; " these sort of men are sometimes pleased to call themselves gentlemen."

As soon as the young man appeared, (and Fanny had been true to a hair in her description,) Aunt Bab greeted him with more than usual politeness, asked him to be seated, and introduced him right and left as if he had been a dignitary of no small consequence. She then began gradually to weave the thread of that history, which the gentleman in question (who was an attorney's clerk) soon perceived would end in an avowal of inability to pay. He heard her story throughout with exemplary patience, and, in truth, she neither spared him or herself, for she gave him so complete an

account of their birth, parentage, and education—of their life, present and past—of their hopes, fears, and future projects, that, had he so pleased, he might instantly have published the history of the Allnutt family from the best and latest authority.

When it had drawn to a close, and when she had avowed their present difficulties, the young man with a grave face said, “I am afraid, ma’am, this will be an awkward business;” he then in a few words informed her that any compromise for non-payment of rent was out of the question, and that before the day was over she would find how fatal would be the consequences of any defalcation, and hinted that the distress would immediately be issued.

“But I promise you,” said Barbara, “that you will be paid the very first moment we receive our dividends from the Mexican bonds, and I am sure I can’t say more. After all, sir, there is such a place as Mexico, and the whole nation is as responsible to us as we are to you.”

The young man appeared not in the least touched, but on the contrary smiled.

“But you surely would not be cruel enough,” said Barbara, “to turn an honest family into the street, who have been brought into difficulty by no fault of theirs.”

The young man shrugged up his shoulders and said, “The law must have its course.”

Barbara now looked serious and distressed, and whilst her loquacity lapsed into silence, her former elation turned into dejection.

Fanny was the picture of woe, and cast up her eyes beseechingly to Tom, who began to feel that the moment of his success was approaching. She then tried her eloquence upon her ‘nice young man,’ who had gradually expanded in her mind into a fiend, a giant of strength, a tyrant, an odious hard-hearted individual.

“Sir,” she said, “it is really shocking that you should remain so unshaken when so many interesting persons are entreating your forbearance. You are told the money will not fail to

be paid, and still you do not appear to believe us,—allow me to say, that it would show better breeding if you did.”

“ You know the alternative, madam,” said the ‘ nice youth ;’ “ either immediate payment or the consequences. Am I to return to my employer and to tell him that you can’t pay ?”

“ Sir,” said Tom, with a most magnanimous swagger, and glancing his eye at Mary, who was seated in a corner absorbed in grief,—“ Sir, you are not called upon to be insolent, although you may be peremptory. As long as I am here, these ladies shall never want a protector nor a banker.” Then taking Aunt Bab on one side towards the spot where Mary was seated, he said with as much feeling as he could throw into his unsentimental features, “ Dear Miss Allnutt, do pray allow me to settle this business for you. I see you will be involved in immediate ruin, and most perplexing difficulties, should you permit this fellow to leave the house without paying his demand; and I hope that you will place sufficient con-

fidence in my friendship" (he sighed and looked at Mary) "to receive from me the supply which I am sure time will enable you to repay. I have a hundred pounds now at your entire disposal—pray allow me to pay the fellow, whilst the remainder may continue in your hands, the whole to be repaid at your utmost leisure."

Barbara's eyes filled with tears of gratitude at this generous proposal, for so she esteemed it. She hesitated to accept it, particularly when Mary ventured to say, "Had you not better wait until uncle Abel's return;" but Fanny coming to her aid, with an enthusiastic expression of her thanks, she could no longer resist the offer, and accepted it without further delay.

"Here, sir," said Tom to the young man,—"here is a check for your demand; give me a receipt as paid on account of Mr. Allnutt, and behave yourself less insolently for the future."

"I'll give you the receipt with pleasure," said the attorney's clerk; "and I tell you what I'll give you also," he added, lowering

his voice ;—" I will give you as sound a horse-whipping as you ever had in your life, if you allow yourself any more impertinent airs."

As soon as Woodby heard this energetic sentence, the blood rushed into his face and as rapidly retreated, leaving it as white as the paper of the receipt which his spirited opponent put into his hand. " Sir, you had better mind what you are at," said Tom, trembling from head to foot ;—" you do not know whom you are talking to."

" I am not ambitious of that honour," said the clerk with a sneer ; " but should you require to be informed who *I* am, which is more to the purpose, here is my card, and you know the rest." Upon which, putting the money into his pocket, he took up his hat, made his bow, and walked out of the house.

" Did you ever see the like of that !" said Tom as soon as he heard his last step : " a low blackguard giving himself these airs ! This is the worst feature of the times I have yet seen ! I am all for equality : but really when a pitiful attorney's clerk thrusts his card

—*his* card to be sure! — into your face because he is told to do his duty, I think it is time for us of the aristocracy to assert our rights too. I never saw this sort of thing before! I wish I had kicked him out of the house; and I will, too, the next time!”

“I wish you had, I am sure,” said Aunt Fanny, “although he is quite as tall as Edward Manby. Now, did I not say right?” she said, turning towards Mary. “Is he not like Edward Manby? — he has his quick, decided manner: but really it was too insolent to treat Mr. Woodby in this manner, when he must have perceived how kind and considerate he was, and when he ought to have thanked him, not us, for his odious rent. It is a pity he is so violent, for he is handsome enough for anything.”

Tom pulled up his cravat, looked full of importance and assumed an air of protection and patronage which was not thrown away upon Mary, but which the good aunts esteemed as a mark of an increase of friendship and interest. He continued his visit longer than

usual, in order to conciliate Mary, who, out of feeling for her aunts, thought it right to express her sense of gratitude for what he had done : he then left the house elated beyond measure at the success which had attended him thus far, although it had been so unseasonably checked by the attorney's clerk's spirit and determination.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Rather incur every misery, than lie under obligations to a villain.

ABEL returned from his visit to the banker, jaded with the walk, but with the same calm and unruffled temper of mind in which he had set off. He informed his sisters that political affairs looked worse than ever in Mexico. He had been well received by the banker, who, as on the former occasion, caused newspapers to be read to him, and confirmed to him by word of mouth the fact, that the unsettled state of that country, in which every man's hand appeared to be against his neighbour, so entirely influenced the money-market in England, that Mexican bonds were actually worth nothing, and that no man could raise five pounds sterling

for one thousand pounds of its paper securities. Abel avowed that in consequence of the exposition thus made to him, he could not venture to solicit the banker for an advance of money upon things so utterly valueless as their bonds ; and after mutual compliments, they separated, he was sorry to say, with as little hope of relief as ever.

Barbara during this recital was evidently bursting with impatience to inform Abel of what had occurred in his absence ; and when he deplored his ill success, to his surprise he saw her smile and shake her head. “ My dear Abel ! ” she exclaimed, “ lay aside your apprehensions for the present ! We have found a friend,—such a friend ! It was by the merest accident he was present when the man came for the rent ; and, would you believe it ! seeing our distress, he insisted upon discharging it himself, leaving it, as he said, to our utmost leisure to repay him ;—and moreover, he left us a good sum over, to go on with till times should mend.”

“ Is it so, indeed ? ” said Abel, looking

serious and full of reflection ; “ and who is our friend ? ”

“ Who ! ” said Bab ; “ who but Tom Woodby to be sure ? — he is a friend indeed, for I am sure he is one in need. You ought to have seen how well he managed with the man, who talked of issuing distress and every sort of odious contrivance to make us pay ! Tom paid him outright, and obliged him to give a receipt. I thought they would have fought on the spot ! — But the long and the short of it is, that we are now free for the next six months.”

“ So, then, we are in debt ! ” exclaimed Abel with a deep-drawn sigh, but suppressed by an inward impulse of resignation.

“ You really cannot call yourself in debt to such a friend as Tom Woodby ! ” said Aunt Bab. “ He comes in and goes out as if this house were his own. Besides, who knows what may happen ! I am sure he does not come hunting after old women like Fanny and me : and you know there is only one young one among us — I need not say more.”

Fanny felt as great a shock as if she had

stumbled over a sharp-edged footstool at hearing this open avowal of old age, and said, with some ill-humour, "There is such a thing as a middle age, Bab; and that, you know, does not come on till youth has completely expired. Don't let us make ourselves older than we are! Tom Woodby certainly is very attentive to all of us: if Mary would only take example from me, and receive him as he ought to be received, I make no doubt what would be the result."

"I am sure that I shall ever be happy to do everything in my power to please you in all things," said Mary; "but I must not allow you to believe that I ever can approve of Mr. Woodby, or that I ever will give him any encouragement. I do not like him — his manners and conversation are offensive; and I do not think that you would wish your niece to act so dishonourable a part as to encourage his addresses with the view of securing his wealth."

Mary had never spoken in so decisive a tone before, and her aunts were astonished. Barbara looked at her for a while and said, "My

dear Mary, I quite enter into your feelings ; but still you must allow the experience of age to plead against the romance of youth. There are thousands of marriages which turn out very well without the preliminary of the passion called love : indeed, where they take place upon that foundation only, they are constantly found to be productive of much misery, and to be followed by a feeling very much the opposite of that bewitching illusion. In the case before us, both your aunt Fanny and, I believe I may add, your uncle Abel, as well as myself, are of opinion that if you were to marry Tom Woodby, you would have a fair prospect of happiness before you. Your good sense would soon wean him from his extravagant love of the world. His recent generosity, quite spontaneous on his part, shows that he possesses many good qualities ; and those little ebullitions of temper which frequently break out (and who is ever free from them !) would soon be softened when brought into contact with your never-failing sweetness of disposition. His wealth would save you from the

miseries to which you see us now exposed, and at the same time place us beyond that want which threatens to involve us in the extreme of misery. Indeed, my dear, you must think better of him than you do, and keep romance out of your head—I 'm sure I 'm right."

"I am quite of your opinion," said Fanny. "If that Captain Rawbone, who once had the audacity to propose to me, had only had a fortune, I do not think I should have been justified in refusing him,—although my repugnance to his red whiskers and freckled skin was just as great as Mary's can be to Tom's little ugly figure and ridiculous airs and graces."

"For my part," said Abel, "I must say, however much I should wish to see our dear Mary well settled in life, still I should oppose myself to anything which would force her inclinations, or induce her to marry a man she cannot esteem. There is only one man I have yet known who I think at all worthy of her: but however, that is impossible—it is past praying for. All things are ordained for the best!"

Mary blushed to the eyes when she heard

her uncle's words, which were spoken more as if he were thinking aloud, than addressed to any particular person.

Fanny exclaimed, "Who can that be, Abel?"

Bab said, "I know whom you mean; but that can never be. Would that John were here, and he would set everything to rights!"

They continued to talk thus—to speculate upon futurity, to turn over in discussion various schemes for gaining their bread, during which they wondered they had not seen Mark Woodcock for a long time past; when, as if to confirm the well-known proverb, who should make his appearance but the aforesaid Mark himself!

He was received with the greatest cordiality and joy, which, however, were soon turned into sorrow, when they heard the object of his visit. He informed them that he was about to undertake a very long journey, and that he should be absent at least four months. It appeared that in consequence of the death of Mr. Oldbourn, one of Mr. Fairfax's clients, it became expedient to recall the brother of that

client from Asia, where he was travelling; for according to the tenor of the will, it was necessary that he should fulfil certain provisions within a limited period. Mark announced that he had been appointed to proceed in search of this gentleman. "You see," said he, "as I am a *dab* at French, Mr. Fairfax has selected me to perform this out-of-the-way concern. It will be *rum* work, I dare say, for everybody says that foreigners are queer chaps."

Many were the expressions of regret upon hearing this piece of intelligence; for to lose a friend, when distress is at hand, is very much like breaking a link of the drag-chain when going down hill. Mark hoped to soften the sorrow expressed at his departure by assuring them that he would not fail to bring back something curious for each. He promised Barbara some Turkey-figs, and hoped too that he might be able to get her some Turkey-cocks,—although he doubted whether the native country, as he called it, of those birds, could ever produce any like those which came from Norfolk.

“But pray tell us, Mr. Mark,” said Fanny, who was always alive to a piece of gossip, “who is this Mr. Oldbourn you are going to seek?—I don’t think I have heard that name before.”

Mark was a good man of business although he did not study the graces of language, and was ever cautious in speaking upon subjects referring to matters of his vocation; he was therefore slow to answer the question put to him. “I do not exactly know,” said Mark; “but this I can say, that he is in some manner or other related to a young gentleman I used to see here when first you came to Golden-square.”

“Who? — Edward Manby!” exclaimed Fanny.

This exclamation awakened the curiosity of all present. Abel drew near with his ears open and with inquiry in his looks; Mary’s bosom heaved with unusual agitation; and Aunt Bab followed up her sister’s exclamation by many others of a similar import. “I always thought that youth must belong to some-

body," she added; "he has such an air of good breeding about him."

"Do tell me," said Abel to Mark, "have you heard anything concerning Edward Manby lately? We have been expecting news from him with the utmost impatience, for a letter has long been due, and it appears to us the very strangest circumstance in the world that he should have left us so long ignorant of his proceedings."

Mark pleaded total ignorance of his present abode and of his pursuits, and said that he only guessed from certain circumstances which he was not at liberty to repeat, that Manby was in some measure connected with the object of his intended mission.

Mary's imagination was excited in the highest degree by what Mark divulged. She turned over in her mind every conversation she had had with Edward; he was never prone to speak of himself, and therefore she was but little acquainted with his private history. Aunt Bab had doubts relative to the purity of his birth, and his own silence upon the subject

confirmed those doubts. Mary recollected Oldbourn as a name which he had once pronounced, and imagined it to be the maiden name of his mother ; but her imperfect memory just served to render her ignorance distressing. She would have given the world to know more, for then she might perhaps have come to some certain conclusion as to what might have happened to him.

Aunt Fanny returned with vigour to the charge, with the intention of sapping Mark's integrity ; but he resisted, at once declaring that in his situation he was ever precluded from telling tales out of school, and added, that even now he felt that he had transgressed. He said that one of the first rules which Mr. Fairfax impressed upon those employed in his office was undeviating secrecy.

“ But you are going away in a few days,” said Fanny : “ what can it signify what you tell us ?”

“ That's a good one !” said Mark. “ If I let the cat out of the bag in England, it's in England that she will do the mischief, although

I may be among the Turks and out of the quandary. No, no, Miss Fanny! ‘mum’ is the motto of an attorney’s clerk.”

“You are very provoking,” said Fanny; “I thought that smart young gentlemen like you never refused a lady anything.”

This compliment awoke all Mark’s vanity, (for he had considerable prepossessions in favour of his own gentility,) and he was beginning to get himself into an attitude to make a concession, when Abel interposed and said, “Fanny, you are not fair upon Mr. Mark; you have no right to seduce him from his duties—duties to the sense of which he has appealed, and which he has manfully defended.” And then turning to the youth, he said, “Although we would willingly learn all that can be said concerning Edward Manby, in whose fate and history we are as much concerned as if he were our own brother, still we will never do it by obtaining the sacrifice of your integrity.” Then assuming a gayer tone, he added:—“If you are determined to be ‘mum,’ we will not press you further,

but will heartily and sincerely wish you a prosperous journey and a safe and speedy return. Give us your promise that when you return you will immediately come and see us." He then added with a deep-drawn sigh, "God only knows where we may then be! but wherever we are, we shall be glad to see you."

Mark then took his leave, and particularly noticed Mary in his last farewell. He shook her warmly by the hand, assured her that he would never forget her, and that he would do his best to bring her back something pleasing and acceptable. He then left the house, and they saw him no more.

When he was gone, they gave full scope to their curiosity upon the theme which Mark had set them—namely, who Edward Manby could be, and how he was connected with the name of Oldbourn? They referred to the story which Mr. Goold Woodby had formerly related, that he was the son of an officer, who, together with his wife, had died in the West Indies, and that his mother having made an ill-assorted marriage, was discarded by her re-

lations. Putting this together with other circumstances, they concluded his mother's name was Oldbourn, and that a death having ensued according to Mark's report, Edward might have become a person of importance.

Abel determined to write to Edward's uncle at Liverpool to enquire what had become of him ; and upon this they allowed the matter to rest for the present.

CHAPTER XIX.

The base man will insult the poor man in his adversity, which he would not venture to do in his prosperity.

EVER since Tom Woodby's display of generosity he assumed a new manner towards the Allnutts, affected great intimacy, made himself as much at home as if he were one of the family, and did not cease to persecute Mary with his attentions. This would have been, perhaps, an earnest of the sincerity of his friendship, but that it was accompanied by airs of protection so vulgar and so presuming, that it was evident he required something beyond mere expressions of gratitude for the benefit he had conferred. He now never lost an opportunity of expressing his admira-

tion of Mary whenever he conversed with her aunts; who, on their side, thinking that every time he opened his lips on the subject his proposal of marriage was about to be made, were always sure to encourage his professions. He roundly asserted that in his opinion, when comparing her to other beautiful persons of his acquaintance, she was the most perfect of her sex, and that she was born to enslave mankind. In the composition of these bursts of eulogy he would place himself in an attitude of such complete satisfaction, that it was difficult to decide whether he was more in love with Mary or himself. He would frequently complain of her cruelty; and then endeavour to throw an infusion of sentimentality into his repugnant features, which made his round face look like one of those monsters that often terminate the angle of a Gothic ornament. Such attempts to produce effect were not lost upon the aunts, who after each succeeding effort always expected the matter-of-fact result. They became at last quite tired of so

many abortive strains, and Aunt Bab at length determined to hasten the event by management.

Being left alone with Bab, Tom had been descanting largely upon his carriages, his horses, his beautiful lodgings, and his intentions, whenever he became settled, to adopt the taste of the charming person whom he hoped one day to call his own, and to allow himself no wish but hers; when Aunt Bab said, "But who is this charming person? You every day increase our curiosity and impatience to learn."

"Ah!" said Tom with affected feeling, "I dare scarcely trust my imagination with the hopes which thrill through my breast. I would make you my confidant, but I despair even of your friendship."

Bab was softened into a mood quite unusual to her, and said, "I am very willing to be your confidant on this occasion. You could not have fixed upon one more likely to help you, if I am not mistaken in the person I

have long thought the object of your affections."

"Will you indeed be my confidant?" said Tom, his little person beaming with unusual animation; "and have you then indeed guessed? Well, you are right; I am in a state bordering upon delirium—so much do I wish to make myself agreeable to your divine niece!"

"Oh then, at length the murder is out!" said Bab, clapping her hands with joy; "this is just what we have expected: poor Mary has never been prepared for this, and we must cautiously break it to her."

"You promise then to use your best endeavours," said Tom, "to make her favourable to my hopes?"

"Yes, truly," said Bab; "and so shall Fanny too. My brother is scrupulous in influencing her mind on a subject of such vast importance to her future happiness; but when he reflects upon the solid advantages which will accrue to us all, he too, I am sure, will persuade her to acquiesce in our united wishes."

Tom did not quite relish the turn which Bab's observations were taking; but being well satisfied to have gained what he called an important step, and trusting to the powerful agency of the pecuniary obligation to which he had subjected the family, he trusted that little by little he might attain that nefarious object for which alone he strove.

He was no sooner gone, than Barbara, big with the news, ran to seek Fanny and Abel, to whom she disclosed all the circumstances of the interview and its result. She could scarcely contain herself for joy, for she looked upon all their difficulties as vanished. Mary, she argued, married to a rich man, would become a rich woman. A very little help would suffice to maintain herself, her sister, and Abel, until John arrived, or until their affairs had come round, and then they would again be independent. Tom might have his faults, but Mary would not fail to correct them; and she would not only become the favourite, but the principal ornament of the whole Woodby family. In short,

the advantages were incalculable, and it behoved them to lose no time in influencing Mary to favour the proposal by every means in their power. Fanny partook in the fullest degree of her sister's joy, but Abel was not so much overcome as they both could have wished. He paused and shook his head ere he spoke, for he adhered to the opinion he had expressed of Tom's character, and was unwilling, however advantageous it might be, to sacrifice Mary to one he could not esteem. They were discussing the question, when Betty brought in a letter and delivered it to Abel, to whom it was addressed. It was an ill-folded, ugly-looking letter, one that might come from some illiterate person, and the spelling of the direction corresponded to the fashion of the folding. Having opened it he read as follows:—

“MAISTER ABEL.—Sir. I ask your pardon for taking this liberty. It is a sure friend without a name who writes this; because I

heard in the stable-yard that the young squire, Maister Thomas, thinks no more of making that pure angel, Miss Mary, an honest woman than he thinks of eating her, and only because he is a sinful wretch he intends to make her no better than she should be ; and I say this because I heard that young villain Sam Hicks, him they call the tiger, lay a bet that before another month was over she would be within his clutches. With which I am yours to command.

“ A FRIEND.”

“ What can this mean ?” said Abel, turning over the letter on all sides. “ Whom can this be from ?”

“ I should not be surprised if it were from honest Brown,” said Bab after some thought. “ What could he be thinking of ? Mary not an honest woman, and Tom Woodby does not intend to marry her ! The man must be mad !”

“ I can’t think so ill of Tom,” said Fanny :

“yet all men are deceitful creatures—and he is old enough to be as wicked as the best of them. But it can’t be true.”

“If it be Brown who has written this letter,” said Abel, “we must not despise the information, although it comes from so humble a source. If it be not, still we must give it our whole attention, for Mary’s happiness is of too much consequence to be neglected : we must sift this matter to the bottom.”

“My dear Abel,” said Barbara, “the thing is too ridiculous that we should believe it for a moment : this letter must be a hoax. Why you might as well say that Tom Woodby would deceive me, as Mary ! Are we not all here with our eyes open, watching everything he says and does, like so many cats watching a mouse—and does it stand to reason that he is to reduce her to shame, whilst we are looking on ?”

“It will be easy to ask him what are his real intentions,” said Abel ; “and that before we speak to Mary.”

“ Nothing more easy,” said Bab ; “ and I will do it myself the very first time he comes : he will be here presently, and then he shall state what settlements he intends to make, with all the requisite particulars. Leave it to me ; I will manage it nicely, and draw him on to explain everything.”

Having excluded Mary from the conference, as soon as Tom appeared, Aunt Bab (Fanny and Abel being present,) received him with increased attention and confidence. She endeavoured to make him feel that they now considered him as one of the family, and tendered to him those numerous little marks of affection which belong only to relations. But Tom returned with far different views ; for during this short absence, he was visited by repentance for having taken, as he thought, a too hasty step, and he appeared with the intention of retrieving it. He was therefore much mortified to find the family drawn up, as it were, in array to receive him, and he instantly threw his mind into an attitude of defence.

After some preliminary talk, Barbara, clearing her voice, said to him, "I have mentioned your joyful proposal to my brother and sister, and they are here to tell you how happy we shall all be to adopt you as our nephew. In consenting to bestow our niece upon you, we think that we fully counterbalance any worldly advantages she may obtain, by the inestimable worth of the character which she will bring as her portion, for none other has she."

"Yes," said Abel, "should she consent, you will obtain a prize indeed!"

"You will be called the happiest of the happy," said Fanny; "and when the banns of Thomas Woodby and Mary Allnutt are published, as I trust they will be next Sunday, young men will call you fortunate, and parents will listen with envy."

During these speeches Tom looked confused, and scarcely knew what face to put upon it. At one time he thought of skulking out of the room, running away and never returning; but at another, when he reflected upon the vantage

ground he had gained, and how entirely the existence of the family was subject to him, he determined to brave the storm, and to avow his inability to marry.

“I am afraid there has been some mistake. I did not quite say that I intended to marry now,” said Tom.

“Not marry!” loudly exclaimed Bab: “What then?”

He hummed and stammered with various expletives on his lips, whilst the three looked at him with uplifted eyes. At length he said, “You know I am not my own master — my father and mother are opposed to me — I should be very happy hereafter; but now I fear there are a hundred difficulties.”

“Then what we have heard is true!” said Abel.

“Are we to believe that you will marry her hereafter?” said Fanny. “But if so, what will you do in the mean time?”

Tom was awed into respect, and the wicked proposals which he would have made stuck in his

throat : he threw as much humility as he could into his features, and then, with much hesitation, said, " If Miss Mary would condescend to wait—to temporize—matters might be arranged — my father may be conciliated—my mother may come round. I am in an awkward situation—it is impossible for me to do all that I could wish."

" What !" said Bab, almost convulsed with anger, the truth of the anonymous letter flashing on her mind,— " What, sir ! do you dare think us despicable enough to listen to anything dishonourable ? Who do you take us for ?"

" What !" reiterated Fanny, hiding her face with shame ; " do you dare insult us, saying at one time that you will marry our niece, and then that you will not—you a Woodby, and we Allnutts !"

Barbara then continued—" Are you villain enough, sir, in cold blood to insult a respectable family in this manner ? Begone, sir ! never put your foot within these doors again.

We have had intimations of your baseness, but never did we conceive that it would be confirmed by your own avowal. You are an odious, wicked young man, Thomas Woodby : you 'll never come to any good—begone !”

“ You really mistake me,” said Tom, writhing with confusion at having been found out. “ What have I done to be treated thus ?”

“ What have you done, sir ?” said Bab : “ can you ask such a question ? We have been warned against you, and now we find the warning true. Speak out at once, if your intentions are honourable, and destroy our suspicions. Do you propose to marry our niece or not ?”

“ I am not to be bamboozled into a marriage with any one,” said Tom, taking up a tone of insolence ; “ and I do not see why I am to be forced to marry your niece whether I will or not.”

Barbara turned pale with indignation, whilst Fanny could not utter from sorrow and mortification.

Abel during this scene had not said a word, but his whole nature was convulsed—the strongest temptation to anger and violence circled through his veins, and he became pallid with wrath and indignation—his features assumed a cast of desperate determination; but there was within one small monitor at the bottom of the heart (and happy are they who cherish it) constantly rising and becoming more and more vociferous to be heard, until at length it interposed so effectually between his Christian principle and his violence, that he was enabled to collect his mind into the strength of forbearance, and to resign himself to meet this bitter trial with fortitude.

“Sir,” said he to Woodby, “be thankful that you have not to deal with some violent and resentful man of the world, for he would not allow you to quit this house without making your blood answer for this injurious treatment. Be thankful that I am sufficiently master of myself to meet such conduct with mode-

ration ; otherwise, sir, weak and feeble as I am, I would have spurned you with the bitterest indignation, and driven you from before me with the utmost contempt. Go, sir ! leave this house, and never let us see you again !”

“I am sorry,” said the cool villain, “that you take the matter up in this manner ; it is no fault of mine if you choose to quarrel with me. I will not, however, be insulted with impunity by those whom I have saved from starvation. You have only to choose between my offer to your niece and a prison, and I leave you but a short time to think of it.”

“Villain ! wretch ! miscreant !” were words that rose in succession from Bab and Fanny ; whilst Abel, still struggling with himself to keep his hands from assault, opened the door with one hand, and pointing to it with the other, roared out in a voice of thunder, “Begone !—delay, and we will wreak our vengeance upon you. Begone !”

At these words the insolent wretch, vociferating threats of vengeance, left the room, and

bounding down the stairs opened the door and darted out of the house.

“And now welcome ruin,—welcome misfortune!” said Abel clasping his hands; “for they will soon be with us. Let us pray that we may be enabled to meet our fate with fortitude and with entire submission to the Divine will.” He had no sooner finished these words than Mary came into the room, impelled by the sound of the high words which had caught her ear, and full of eager inquiry into the cause of this apparent distress.

“Let us prepare, my dearest Mary,” said her uncle, “for every privation, for every worldly evil, for we have fallen into the hands of a ruthless villain—he will not spare us. Before another day is over I shall be lodged in a prison.”

“In a prison!” exclaimed Bab; “what do you say, Abel? You take things a great deal too seriously; the wretch will never venture to lay his hands upon you: how can he put you into prison, when he told us that we might

pay him back his money whenever it was convenient—at our utmost leisure, he said ; these were his words?”

“A villain in one thing will be a villain in others,” said Abel. “I tell you we have no other prospect than a prison: but let us repeat with reverence, God’s holy will be done!”

“Amen!” said Mary, with pure devotion and resignation beaming in her eyes.

“I wish Edward Manby were here,” said Fanny.

“What a pity it is that Mark Woodcock should be gone!” said Bab.

“Let us put our trust in Heaven,” said Abel ; “for we have not an earthly friend near us to whom we can look for protection ;—again I say, God’s will be done !”

Before the night closed they were visited by Woodby’s attorney, who came to demand payment for the hundred pounds lent. Abel did not allow his sisters to interfere, but at once avowed his inability to discharge the debt. Bab would have asserted Tom’s promise that

the sum might be returned at their leisure, but Abel would not permit any such plea to be alleged; he merely said, "Mr. Woodby is perfectly acquainted with our situation; he knows how impossible it is for us to pay him now, and we are ready to abide by whatever consequences may ensue."

The attorney then retired, and Abel again urged his sisters and his niece to prepare for the worst. "I know nothing of law; it is evident that a man must pay what he owes, in whatever manner the debt may have been contracted, and the law makes no allowances for defects of judgment. Better had we never borrowed this money, for then perhaps we might not have been the cause of so much wickedness in this young man's breast! But again, I say, we must submit to the decrees of Providence, and by patiently waiting until this tyranny is past, we may be certain that the result will be an increase of good to our better interests."

Abel's conduct on this trying occasion tend-

ed greatly to soothe the bitterness of his sisters' feelings; and they all retired to rest, after having poured out the effusion of their hearts with more than usual fervour, in their accustomed evening prayers.

CHAPTER XX.

The righteous man dragged to prison at the suit of an unfeeling designer.

ON the very next morning Abel's anticipations were realized. He had scarcely got out of bed when a knock was heard at the door, and very soon a sheriff's officer appeared, and, producing his warrant, arrested Abel at the suit of Mr. Thomas Gould Woodby, junior. This was no sooner known in the house than all its inmates came rushing from their bed-rooms, with terror in their looks and dismay in their hearts. Aunt Barbara first appeared, backed by old Betty, and addressing the sheriff's officer, as if he were the cause of this act, not only explained from beginning to end the whole of the transaction between herself and Tom Woodby, but attempted to move

his heart by describing the injustice inflicted upon them by the Republic of Mexico. She expended her oratory in vain upon the individual standing before her, who, accustomed to such like scenes, did not allow his official duty to own that he had a heart, but merely civilly inquired of Abel whether he wished to proceed to a sponging-house. Being ignorant of the object of such a house, no one could answer.

“If you cannot afford to pay the expenses of a sponging-house,” said the officer, “I must take you at once to the prison.”

“We can afford nothing,” said Abel, “for we have nothing.”

“May we be allowed to go with him?” said Mary, who had made a violent effort to prevent giving vent to her grief by tears.

“You may accompany him and remain with him in the prison during the day,” said the officer; “but at nine o’clock he is locked up for the night. You had better take with you such clothes and comforts as he may require in prison; and should you wish to be near

him, plenty of lodgings are to be had in the neighbourhood."

With aching hearts and broken spirits did Barbara and Fanny prepare to leave Golden-square. It was determined that they should accompany Abel, take a lodging near him, and, abandoning the one they now occupied, let it for the remainder of their term. They gathered up what things were necessary, and were about to depart, when an incident took place which, whilst it almost overpowered their feelings, in some measure cheered their hearts, because they found that they had a friend in store who truly sympathised in their misery. Old Betty, their faithful servant, came forward, holding in her hand a small canvass bag; and whilst her face bore testimony to the strong feeling which impelled her, she put it into Abel's hand, and said, "Sir, excuse the liberty—I can't help doing this whilst you are so distressed,—there are my savings, pray take them, and God's blessing be upon you all!"

There was a truth and a simplicity in her

whole deportment which struck so directly upon the tender feelings of those present that they could not restrain their tears, and the scene which ensued was one of the deepest pathos. All Barbara's energies were at once overpowered, and taking the old servant's hands within her own, she wrung them with the warmest affection without being able to utter a word. Fanny burst into a flood of tears, whilst Mary cried and turned her heart to God in prayer. Abel alone, having fortified his mind by all the power of piety, had strength enough to express his thanks and his affection to the simple-hearted creature, and having assured her that he would willingly avail himself of her generosity, could it be of any substantial use, requested her to keep her gold for some more pressing occasion, when real and actual destitution should overpower them; and if she were still determined to ally her fortune to theirs, he hoped she would continue to support his sisters and niece by her kindness and fidelity. The sheriff's officer, not accustomed to witness so much virtue and disin-

terestedness, was himself softened, and throwing into his words as much of the tone of consolation as he could command, recommended them to husband whatever money they possessed, for it would be useful in the prison, to secure a better treatment than fell to the lot of the utterly destitute.

Leaving old Betty in charge of their actual lodgings, Barbara, Fanny, and Mary ascended the hackney-coach with Abel, and escorted by the officer, bent their way to the prison, which was situated far away in one of the remote streets of the City. Little was said during their long drive. They thought the streets, the rows of houses, and the passing population, were interminable. At length their eyes caught a view of certain lofty walls, surrounded by spikes, which told them their pilgrimage was nearly over; and in a few minutes after they stopped in front of a heavy, dark-looking building, the gates of which were in perfect character with those of a place of confinement. The officer announced that they were to alight. Leaving the carriage, they straightway were

received at a strong iron wicket-gate, by the Cerberus of the establishment, who, accustomed to such visiters, let them pass without a word. They proceeded with dismay in their hearts, looking around as if they were shut out of the world for ever. They walked between two high walls, on one side seeing nothing but a massive accumulation of brick, on the other looking through a succession of narrow grated windows, which disclosed the forms of a numerous company of prisoners seated in groups on benches and around tables. Again they came to an iron wicket as strongly fortified as the first, where they were received by a second jailor; and some words having passed between him and the sheriff's officer, they proceeded onwards, winding their way through intricate alleys and walls, occasionally meeting men of dirty and unwashed aspect, until they reached a third wicket, opening upon a large open court, in which was seen a considerable number of people, the future companions in adversity of the unfortunate Abel. Here they stopped awhile until their conductor had made some

short preliminary arrangements, when they were admitted within the wicket, and this they were informed was Abel's destined place of residence. It was a severe trial when they looked around them and saw the gloomy spot and the wretched men who inhabited it. On all sides were high walls covered with iron spikes, and every avenue was barred and defended to the utmost. Stone benches were placed against the walls, and the court-yard was paved with flag-stones. On first inspection, the prisoners made no impression of being in misery: many were noisy, apparently full of coarse gaiety; others walked and talked with seeming indifference; others again were taken up with various games; whilst here and there might be observed groups seriously engaged in the discussion of their affairs. Some few, solitary and dejected, appeared wrapt in thought, and kept aloof from the throng. In some places might be observed the wife and children cheering the spirits of the ruined father—in others a daughter might be seen tending her sick parent; and everywhere, and in every person, the reflecting

mind would find ample materials for speculation.

When Abel, his sisters and niece, appeared, they made but a transient sensation; for what is frequent, however distressing, soon becomes a habit, and is therefore beheld with indifference. When, however, Mary had come under the attention of the prisoners, her beauty became the theme of every tongue; and but for the desire of remaining with her uncle, she would willingly have left the dismal place. From the court-yard they had access to a room common to all, where tables were placed at intervals, surrounded by wooden benches, and thither they retreated to converse unobserved. This room, which was of large dimensions, and well lighted from the court-yard, scarcely wore the appearance of a prison—and to those who could afford to pay for better food (which was supplied on the spot) than the common bread and water of the establishment, the privations they were called upon to undergo were not of that nature which are generally supposed to be the concomitant of a prison. Abel was inform-

ed that the prisoners enjoyed the advantage of a chapel on Sundays, and that an allowance of meat was given to each prisoner who attended divine service. Hardened indeed must that heart be in wickedness, thought Abel, which requires to be enticed by earthly food to receive the advantage of heavenly; and that small incident alone, more than any other, taught him what might be the character of his future associates.

Having duly paid the customary fees, and read all the regulations for ensuring order and cleanliness, he was told by the officer that the governor of the prison was a most excellent humane man, who was ever ready to listen to complaints, and to further the comforts of those under his charge, and which he frequently did with most beneficial results. This was cheering intelligence to them all; and they determined as soon as possible to make themselves known to one who might be of so much service in alleviating their distressing situation. Barbara and Fanny were dejected and oppressed with woful forebodings;

they could not suppose that what they saw before them was all that Abel had to suffer : the spirits of the one had entirely forsaken her, for she relinquished the hope of ever returning to the enjoyment of the world ; the other, who had never been burthened by responsibility, was quite bewildered and astounded at the turn their affairs had taken, and, lost in one great confusion of ideas, sat mute with despair. Although, in common acceptation, they were good religious women, performing the duties supposed to constitute Christians, yet this event showed how very far they were from enjoying all the advantages of that character in its brightest meaning. Their brother, on the contrary, who in truth had laboured unremittingly to act up to his principles, now felt the whole value of the faith which he professed,—his cheerfulness never forsook him ; with the same equanimity that he encountered loss of fortune, he met the confinement of his prison, and he would have faced death with the same constancy ; he now felt the whole power of the support which religion produces ;

and instead of requiring cheering words to soothe his misery, he it was who gave strength to his desponding sisters. When they deplored the confinement to which he was condemned, the associates to whom he was united, and the long tedium of the days and nights which he would pass without occupation, Abel gave for answer, "Do not deplore my fate—I want but little; leave me alone with my Bible, and I have all that I require. If a man cannot succeed in making a paradise of his own breast by reflecting upon the glorious promises made to him therein, and battenning upon his faith in them, then indeed he is much to be pitied; and wretched indeed should I be without such comfort. But as I have a Bible, thanks be to God! and as my existence is taken up in thinking upon its contents, I am happy, and perhaps in reality happier than most men."

"But surely," said Bab, "you are not going to sit down here for life satisfied with your fate, whilst you have to combat the injustice of that wretch Tom Woodby?"

“ Yes,” said Fanny ; “ and not only of Tom, but of his whole odious family, who in our days of prosperity professed friendship for us, and now look upon us as not fit to be spoken to. They treated us worse than dogs on that day when we dined with them. As for Lady Thomson, I really thought that she expected us to make her an apology for having bodies and souls as well as herself.”

“ My dear sisters,” said Abel, “ I would willingly pay Tom Woodby what we owe him, and we must labour so to do to the utmost of our ability ; but as I cannot labour here, I must wait until other means are within my power. You must in the mean while support yourselves ; and as it appears we are blessed with a good governor of this prison, I dare say he will assist us in disposing of your work.”

Mary’s eyes glistened at this proposal ; and in her present situation she professed herself happier than she had been for some time, principally because she had got rid of the odious importunities of Tom Woodby, and because

she now really had a specific object for the exertion of her whole industry.

As the day drew to a close, they felt it necessary to return to Golden-square for the night, with the intention of hiring a new lodging in the neighbourhood on the morrow. They then took their leave of Abel. This was the first time they had been separated, and bitter indeed was the moment when they saw the gate turned upon them, leaving him a prisoner within. Although he was in the close relation of a brother, little did they know the strength of those inward feelings of his breast, which now made him anything rather than an object of pity—feelings of which only the possessor can possibly know the real power and extent. Barbara wept; Fanny would have bemoaned herself outright, had she not been checked by the gaze of the surrounding prisoners; and Mary, whose heart was ready to break from the intensity of her emotions, (loving her uncle with the most ardent affection,) stifled her grief, because she knew how much she would add to his affliction did she

exhibit all her feeling. Abel turned from them and was soon lost among the crowd of prisoners; whilst they, escorted by the same sheriff's officer as before, bent their way homewards. With his help they secured lodgings in the neighbourhood of the prison; and having quitted Golden-square, we shall for the present leave them installed in their new abode, to relate other particulars necessary to the development and winding up of this our history.

Should we have succeeded in interesting our readers in the fate of our simple friends, we fear that we must still call upon their sympathies for some indefinite time. We leave them in a wretched lodging, consisting of two small rooms ill furnished, and a most minute attic, where old Betty lay. We leave them to gain their livelihood by the work of their own hands, to struggle with poverty in every shape, and to combat the thousand distresses which belong to dependence. Unknown and poor, they were suspected and distrusted; without a friend, their days passed on in dull sameness; and were it not for the influence of Abel's con-

duct and exhortations, the practical advantages of which now shone with redoubled force, they would have sunk into hopeless despair, and have died the death of those broken-hearted wretches who live without God in the world.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

LONDON :

PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENILEY,
Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

The first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the

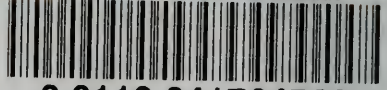
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the

the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the

the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the

the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 041764702